Deku? I think he's some pro...
Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/22080895.

Rating:
General Audiences

Archive Warning:
No Archive Warnings Apply

Categories:
Gen, F/M, M/M

Fandom:
僕のヒーローアカデミア | Boku no Hero Academia | My Hero Academia

Relationships:
Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead & Midoriya Izuku, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead & Fukukado Emi | Ms. Joke, Midoriya Izuku & Sasaki Mirai | Sir Nighteye, Fukukado Emi | Ms. Joke & Midoriya Izuku, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead/Fukukado Emi | Ms. Joke, Bakugo Katsuki/Consequences, Bakugo Katsuki & Inui Ryou | Hound Dog, Bakugou Katsuki/Kirishima Eijirou, everyone/therapy, I keep changing my mind, don't be suprised if things keep changing, Midoriya Izuku/Uraraka Ochako

Characters:
Midoriya Izuku, Midoriya Inko, Fukukado Emi | Ms. Joke, Sasaki Mirai | Sir Nighteye, Mr. Brave (My Hero Academia), Bakugou Katsuki, Monoma Neito, Yaoyorozu Momo, Todoroki Shouto, Iida Tenya, Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Nedzu (My Hero Academia), Yamada Hizashi | Present Mic, Toogata Mirio, Awata Kaoruko | Bubble Girl, Moashi Juuzou | Centipeder, Shimura Nana, Class 1-A (My Hero Academia), Kayama Nemuri | Midnight, Inui Ryou | Hound Dog, Kan Sekijirou | Vlad King, Shigaraki Tomura | Shimura Tenko, Sensei | All For One, Kurogiri (My Hero Academia), Shinsou Hitoshi, Usagiyama Rumi | Miruko, Hadou Nejire, Amajiki Tamaki, Gran Torino (My Hero Academia), Dabi (My Hero Academia), Toga Himiko, Iguchi Shuuichi | Spinner, Muscular (My Hero Academia), Mustard (My Hero Academia), Sako Atsuhiro | Mr. Compress, Moonfish (My Hero Academia)

Additional Tags:
Quirkless Midoriya Izuku, Informant Midoriya Izuku, Smart

Midoriya Izuku, BAMF Midoriya Izuku, Dadzawa, Parental Aizawa Shouta | Eraserhead, Midoriya Izuku Does Not Have One for All Quirk, Recommendation Student Izuku Midoriya, Recommendation Exam (My Hero Academia), Midoriya Izuku Has A Gun, Toogata Mirio Has One for All Quirk, Manga Spoilers, Bakugo Katsuki goes to Therapy, Romance isn't the main point of this story, My Hero Academia: Vigilantes References, Adopted Toga Himiko

Language:
English

Series:
Part 1 of For The Want Of A Nail

Collections:
A Million and a Half Quirkless Izuku Midoriya Stories, The Witch's Woods, Long Fics to Binge, Just sum of ma fav broccoli boi fic, Purrsonal Picks, Noj's Top Shelf, Storycatchers' pile of heroic hero stuff, Jeru's Top Fav My Hero Academia fics, Long fics to binge at 1 AM when you can't sleep and desperately need something occupying your mind so you don't enter a depressive spiral, Fics That make the cars go boom, Behold the Sacred Texts, Creative Chaos Discord Recs, If I ever go on TV to talk about fanfics - these are the ones I will mention, its-yaboijojo Read Later/Favorites, My Hero Academia Fics to reread, Bnha Bookclub Discord Recs, Got 99 problems but these ain't one, You haven't lived if you haven't read this, Aizawa and Izuku Mentor-Parent Fics, Darkside_Dreamer's_Favorites, Fics which radiate chaos, MHA Fanfics That Are Better Than Sleep, Favs mesmo, mha fics, Fics deemed worthy, Stories That Deserve More, Catlady5001's Favorite Fanfics, Bnha fics that carved out a place in my brain, Mha heart mah soul, The Good Shit™, My Personal Favorite AO3 Fanfics, Fics I recomend, DekuDekuBitch, Bigbraindeku, Pacing's bests, Fav MHA long fic recs, beauts stonkers goats honkers the bee's knees and the doozies ☆, DerangedDeceiver's Favorite Fics, Into another world, Unfinished_best_bnha, RaeLynn's Epic Rec List, None For Yall, Mellow's Five Star Fics, bernie's bnha rec list, FreakingAmazingFics, BNHA Treasure Box, In-Progress I Want To Read, ♡ >100k Fav Fics Bnha ♡, The Dadzawa is strong with this one, T's Recommended Fics, Unpleasant's MHA Recommendations, fantastic_fics, Don't Forget These Fics, Tik Tok Recommendations, The best of mha on ao3, Ace's Favorite FIcs, nonsense station's discord recs!, Speaker's must-reads, to be read boku no hero fics, call 911 for I have died at the sheer perfection that are these fics, SakurAlpha's Fic Rec of Pure how did you create this you amazing bean, Personal Favorites, bnha

dekuism, I've given my heart and soul for this fic, Quality Fics, MhaBestEverWorks, ⭐My Hero Stories Worth Your Time⭐, Lady's collection of PERFECT fics., 📚 Fanfic Forum Discord Recs, Shady BNHA Faves (Including Crossovers), Fanfiction ***I*** Deem Worthy Of The Name, Fics that soothe my soul at 4am, fics i can and will stay up to 3am to re-read, Badass Quirkless Midoriya Izuku, Completed stories I've read, I don't know what to name this collection, FinishedBooks, Excellent Completed Gen & Platonic Fiction, Completed_ReRead, BNHA fanfics that I liked and cried and definitely in my top 50, •s+ tier•, Extremely Specific Stories with Chaotic Vibes, Pthaloteal, My Escapism List, bnha fics that give me a ton of serotonin, S.T.I.L.L., Stories that bring me back, Best fanfics_, complete works BNHA (Izuku' centric), The Gift of Caeculus, Subscribed books I've finished, BnhaHits1, mha fanfic that waters my crops, Академия. Любимые, Best Completed Stories, plz plz plz read these masterpieces so we can rant and be friends, Dadzawa Vibes, Best stories for sleepless nights, bnha faves that keep me going, Brilliant Bnha Fics, Kai's Eclectic Collection of Fics, Bnha (rheos), gothelixar recs, MyHero: Quirkless Hero, Vivian's Collection of Finished Works, Quirkless, Fics I've Read That Are Longer Than Pride and Predjudice, Mijwan's Favourites, 10/10 Recommendations, my hero academia: a medley, Going Plus Ultra, BaNHAmmer, Boku no Hero Academia, Wolfis MyHeroAcademia Library, Best, Slick_Quicks_V, craftyreader_favs, SooSoo's Library, Good soup, IZUKU MIDORIYA AND THE MAGIC OF REALIZING HOW F*CKED UP YOUR SOCIETY IS, Good Fanfics, Izuku being a fucking badass, BNHA izuku centered fics, Finished_best, Long_fics, Fics recommended by lunakaiii on tik tok, Finished favourites, Finished and Amazing, Worth It BNHA Fanfics - Completed, Autiser's Favorites, My Favourite Bnha stories to read, Leannic Recs, Like A Favorite Sweater, The SMARTEST MF: Izuku Midoriya, dawn goes down to day, Fanfic_Recs_MHA, Dadzawa protects the Green Bean!💚, BNHA Fics that cured my cancer, Flashfreeze Recs, I will re read it again insted of studying for sure, ✧Chris's Best Izuku Fics✧, i may not be a bottom but these are my tops, My favo bnha ficsss, things i read that were pretty rad if i do say so myself, My hero academia, From the Vault, .⋆˚.•*.↩My Bebu multiverse♡♡↬.*•.˚⋆., MHA_fanfics_because_idk, STO My Hero Academia - completed works, Don't forget, Fucking amazing, Writeass's favorite fics, Fae Forest, International Fanworks Day 2022 - Classic Fic Recs, fanfic for the soul <3, .☃Thoth's Luxury Library☃., Maybe someday I will read these, Completed Fanfics, The Cream of the Crop, MHA masterpieces, Nohn's Favorites, Personal_Preferences, mages god tier reads, Dogium's Favorites,

longfics that butter my bread, 4376(HERO), The Good Stuff n All That Jazz, Completed good books, hufflepuffdemiwizard's completed works, The Eternal Crack Server Fic Rec Collection, Goodsoup1543, Mizuu's Midnight Reads, mushi's current faves, Niks, My Personal BNHA Fics Recommendations, Well. I read it., ✧BNHA FICS I LOVE✧, Vigilante!AU, You could Charge for these and I'd pay, Izuku don't need no quirk, (mostly) just some funky lil Izu fics, LayhaC Fave BNHA Fics, Eatbook's Cherished and wanting more All Fandoms, goodlol, Amazing My Hero Academia Fics that are Completed, Parsonsaj's Best of the Best of the Best, sleep deprivation never bothered me anyway or whatever elsa said, □ Lux's fav fics□, I need þerapy but instead I'll read comfort fanfics, I'm in love with these fics, THE ♪ UBIQ □ ☠ THE 🎭 UNIQUE 🏵, Read and enjoyed, BestofBNHA_rereadMONTHLY, Still reading - bnha - my attention span is really short, stuff ive finished reading □ 🙆🙈, Fics I need to finish reading, Finished and amazing works I've already read, Find Me Where The Wild Things Are, BNHA Karl Kolumna aprooved, my little problem hero, Tigerhawk's Shelf of Novels, Leo's Collection of Read MHA Shit, All kinds: BNHA's Fics version, Rebel Devil To Read, ☆*: .｡. o(≧▽≦)o .｡.:*☆, Mays My Villain Academia, Villan/hero\vigilante Izuku, Vallawares, Beeps favorite bnha fics, DWL kindle, Quirkless Izu my beloved, TheBot's Favorite BNHA Fics, Our Hero Academia!, Rivers of Stars ☄, ✧ number one problem child ✧

Stats:

Published: 2020-01-02 Completed: 2021-07-14 Words: 191,001 Chapters: 94/94

Deku? I think he's some pro...

by Clouds (myheadinthecoudsnotcomingdown)

Summary

Yagi Toshinori watched the green haired boy walk away after saving his friend and shook his head. While the boy's actions were heroic, he was just too reckless. He walked in the opposite direction, thinking about a time he could meet the candidate Sir Nighteye put forward.

Izuku Midoriya goes home and decides that, even if he can't be hero himself, he can still help them with his analysis. Cue Izuku catching the attention of multiple heroes who are a little more open-minded and willing to see the potential in a quirkless kid.

This fic has a discord.

Notes

I've had this idea running around in my brain for a while. I was going to try to finish the story before publishing any of it but *shrugs* I got impatient.
Hope you enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

- Translation into Español available: Deku? Creo que es un Pro... by dead_hara

Hope and Heartbreak

Even after an hour-long shower, Izuku still felt the weight of the past 24 hours clinging to his skin. All Might looked down on him from every wall in his room, judgmental eyes staring straight into his soul.

You can't be a hero

Not without a quirk

Be realistic

Izuku went to bed crying for his broken dream.

His room looked empty without all his All Might merch.

It wasn't that Izuku hated All Might now, it's just that every time he looked at the smiling hero, all he could think was *you can't be a hero.* Just because Izuku was finally coming to terms with that fact didn't mean he needed it playing on a loop in his head every time he's at home. He still had a few posters up from some of his other favorite heroes, but he'd changed his sheets to a plain black set that he'd found collecting dust in the linen closet paired with a gold pillowcase. It wasn't official merchandise, but it reminded Izuku of Eraserhead anyway.

It had taken a few days for him to gather the courage, but Izuku had finally sat down and updated his hero analysis notebooks, leaving out the parts on All Might's secret weakness. It was… oddly comforting. He had thought it would be painful and it was in some ways, but it was mostly familiar, like his analysis was the only part of himself that hadn't shattered alongside his hero dream. That was why he found himself, during his latest bout with insomnia, browsing a lesser known hero forum. He'd found it several years earlier and quickly figured out that a lot of underground heroes used it to communicate with each other, since it offered encrypted chats and accounts were only known by random numbers, rather than usernames. He'd spent about two weeks back then figuring out which accounts corresponded to which heroes, but he had never posted himself. As Izuku drowsily scrolled through old posts, a crazy idea occurred to him. If he couldn't be a hero himself, why couldn't he help the real heroes be better?

In the morning, he'd blame it on sleep deprivation and then promptly

die of mortification, but that didn't change the fact that, at two o'clock in the morning, Izuku Midoria sent ten underground heroes in depth analyses of their quirks and fighting styles.

New Message

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Thank you for the analysis. It was eye opening to see my strengths and weaknesses from an outside perspective, not to mention the ideas for improvement.

Izuku was hyperventilating. Eraserhead, *the* Eraserhead *,* had thanked him for his analysis. *The Eraserhead!* It almost made up for the Kachaan and his lackeys beating him up again during lunch. Not quite, because the bullying had gotten worse since the sludge villain incident, but it came close! Several other heroes had also sent him messages thanking him, while others, who had apparently heard of his analyses from their friends, had asked him to send them theirs. He was just finishing up verifying the identities of those who had requested analyses (to make sure he wasn't accidentally helping any villains) when he saw a blinking notification in the bottom left corner of his screen.

New Message

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Do you analyze villains?

Deku

Chapter Summary

What do the heroes think of this new "mystery analyst"?

Chapter Notes

Thanks for all the love for this story, guys! You're amazing! I am so excited!
Hey, so on Mr. Brave. Originally, I was going to have this entire group be OCs with the exception of Eraserhead, but I don't really love reading OCs so decided to replace them all with canon characters! Mr. Brave has only showed up in like, one scene, and we don't really know a lot about him except his hero name and quirk, so I was able to make him fit the dynamic and personality I wanted this character to have. In the event he shows up in canon again and we learn more about him, he probably won't be anything like I've imagined him here.

Private Chat

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

So… does anyone know who our mystery analyst actually is?

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Does anyone know who any of us are? We're called *underground* heroes for a reason…

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Point taken.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

It is a valid question though. He came out of nowhere, how do we know he's not a villain giving us false information in order to defeat us?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

How do you know it's a he?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

So far, all the information he's given me has been accurate and no villains have known information about me that they shouldn't. Besides, if he was a villain, I think we would have already been targeted, considering he could have easily beaten any one of us using the information in the analyses he sent us. As strange as the situation is, I think he really is trustworthy, but only time will tell.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

It's possible he's a pro who's new on the scene.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

With *that* level of analysis? More likely he's some veteran deigning to impart his infinite wisdom on the younger generation. He's had an account on this site for years, I checked, but he's never posted before now.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Maybe it's Nedzu?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

No, I already asked him if he was behind it. I'm leaning more toward a

retired pro.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

What are we even supposed to call him? If he's a hero, what's his codename?

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Yeah, typing out *Mystery Analyst* every time is gonna get old real quick.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Well, there's only one logical way to find out.

It had been a little over a week since Izuku had impulsively started sending his analyses to pro heroes and he had quickly fallen into a new routine. Go to school, hide from Kachaan at lunch, more school, run from Kachaan after class, maybe catch a villain fight on the way home, do homework, eat dinner, complete analysis requests from the hero underground, go to bed. Most of the time, heroes simply wanted an analysis for themselves, but a handful had started sending him videos of villains in action for him to analyze.

Today, Izuku logged into his account hesitantly, with Kachaan's most recent jeers still echoing in his ears. It had been a bad day and Izuku had failed at both hiding and running, resulting in twice as many beatings. Why had he ever even thought he could be useful to actual heroes when he was just a weak, useless, worthless, quirkless deku?

Izuku shook his head and opened his inbox to find a new message from Eraserhead.

New Message

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

By the way, what's your codename?

Kachaan's voice echoed in Izuku's mind

Useless

Worthless

Deku

DEKU

DEKU

Private Chat

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

His name is Deku

Meeting the Pros

Chapter Summary

Deku meets up with the pros.

Chapter Notes

Here it is! The moment you've all been waiting for! It's a bit of a time skip. I might make some one shots about various shenanigans that happened during the time not shown, but no guarantees.

“Mom, I’m going to meet up with some friends tonight! I don’t know when I’ll be home, but it’ll probably be pretty late, so don’t bother waiting up for me.” Izuku yelled as he finished packing his laptop and tried to get his bright red shoes on the correct feet.

“Ok baby,” His mom smiled with tears in her eyes, “I’m so glad you have friends, you’ve seemed so much happier lately. Tell them I said hi and invite them to dinner sometime, I want to meet these friends you’re always talking about.”

Izuku hummed noncommittally as his mom pulled him in for one last kiss on the cheek before he ran out the door.

It had been almost seven months since Izuku had wormed his way into the underground hero community, but tonight would be the first time he would be meeting any of his friends in person. There was a massive drug ring they had been following for a while and a lot of heroes were coming together to take them down. They had even invited Izuku, well, Deku, to tag along and maybe even be onsite to help strategize when their plans inevitably went off the rails. He’d warned them that he wasn’t really ready for combat, but there were enough other pros that they didn’t think it’d be problem. The raid itself wouldn’t be happening for another few months anyway, but everyone involved was meeting tonight in a secure location so they could make sure they all work well together and start planning.

The meeting wasn’t in an area Izuku was highly familiar with, but since he’d gotten involved with the underground, he’d spent a lot of time studying maps to create better location analyses and plans for the heroes he helped. So when he exited the train, he confidently followed the mental map he’d memorized before he left. The rundown

apartment complex didn't look like much, but it was typical of the areas his friends worked in. He climbed the stairs to the second floor, found the correct apartment, and took a deep breath.

Then he knocked.

"We're just waiting for Deku, right?" Ms. Joke asked, lounging back in her chair and putting her feet up on the scuffed table. Fourteen other underground pro heroes plus Detective Tsukauchi were all gathered around in the dingy apartment, idly snacking on refreshments as they waited for the meeting to officially begin.

"He should be here soon," Eraserhead replied flatly. There was a knock on the door, "And there he is now."

Sir Nighteye rose and called through the door, "How were things in Tokyo?"

The group had chosen a question/answer password system to ensure that no uninvited guests crashed the party. Everyone inside waited with bated breath, prepared to attack or evade should the answer be incorrect.

"The weather was terrible, but the food was great."

The heroes exchanged shocked glances. The password was correct, but the voice was that of a teenager, not an old man like they had been expecting. They waited one second longer, then Nighteye asked, "Who is this?"

"Deku?" It was stated as if it were a question and the person on the other side of the door was apparently young enough that his voice was still cracking. Nighteye looked to the others for confirmation and Shota shrugged, gesturing to open the door. May as well see where this leads.

The kid, because it was undeniably a kid, on the other side of the door was *not* what Shota was expecting. He was short and scrawny, with just hints of muscles starting to show on his arms, and his dark green hair looked as if he'd lost a battle trying to comb it. To complete the look of an innocent teenager, he was wearing jeans and a T-shirt with, Eraserhead squinted to read the writing, yep, that said *pants.* Deku was wearing a T-shirt that said pants on it.

It seemed that the rest of the heroes were just as shocked as Shota

was, because the whole ensemble sat there silently staring at the kid until he started to awkwardly shuffle his weight between his feet. Finally, Mr. Brave broke the silence.

“ *You’re* Deku?” The kid flinched and Shota sighed. Mr. Brave was more brash than most heroes, but he did get the point across.

“Yes?” Again with answering as if it were a question. Every head turned to Detective Tsukauchi, who just nodded, confirming that the kid was telling the truth, but he looked just as shocked as everyone else. Everyone turned back to look at the kid, who apparently really *was* Deku, who was still standing awkwardly in front of the open door.

“I guess,” Ms. Joke started slowly, “we were expecting someone...older?”

The kid just shrugged. Well, Shota thought, that’s that. He sighed.

“Come in and let’s get started. It’s illogical for you to just stand there all night. And close the door behind you.”

The kid nodded frantically and practically tripped over himself in his hurry to close the door and sit down. Just who was this kid?

“Well,” Detective Tsugauchi started, “now that we’re all here, I guess we can get started on the mission.”

“Wait” Ms. Joke leaned forward in her seat, “Most of us haven’t worked together before, so wouldn’t it be a good idea to get to know each other a little more before we get down to business?” *Wouldn’t it be good to get to know Deku, our curiosity will distract us otherwise.*

“Actually,” Deku spoke softly, “Most of you *have* worked together before, but only in groups of two or three, and no one here has worked with everyone else here with the exception of me and maybe the detective, but I don’t know if I count since I do most of my work virtually…” The kid seemed to realize that he was starting to mumble and shut his mouth in a tight line as if he were expecting to be scolded for it.

“Yeah,” Mr. Brave bit the bullet, “Despite the fact that we’ve all worked with you Deku, we don’t really *know* you. Seems kind of unfair when you know enough about each of us that you could probably kill us in our sleep if you wanted to.”

Deku’s eyes widened and his arms started flailing, “I would never do

that! And I really don't think I could anyway, my analysis isn't really all that special, anyone could do what I do."

Shota didn't agree with *that* , but he decided to let it lie. "I think Brave makes a good point. What hero school do you go to?" Because obviously this kid is training to be a hero, considering he already helps them on a regular basis. Hopefully Nezu would at least be polite when trying to steal him from wherever he was attending.

"Um…I'm still in middle school, actually. I go to Aldera junior high. I don't know where I'll be going to high school yet, but I think I'm going to apply for U.A.'s general education department."

Well, at least Nezu wasn't going to burn any bridges, but…

"Why not the hero course?"

From the way the kid hunched his shoulders, Shota could tell he was trying to appear smaller than he was, which was already pretty darn small. Interesting.

"Despite how much I'd like to, I-I can't be a hero, I… " he took a deep breath, as if steeling his courage, "I'm quirkless"

The words seemed to echo in the small room despite the fact that Deku hardly whispered them. How? He had to have an analysis quirk, or at least one that altered his intelligence. He couldn't be *quirkless* , could he? Though it would make some of his behavior make a lot more sense…

"We brought some footage of known drug ring members for you to analyze, Deku," Apparently Tsukauchi didn't know how to deal with the metaphorical bomb Deku just dropped either, "If you're ready?"

The kid reached into the yellow backpack he'd brought with him and pulled out a standard notebook and a few pens before nodding. The detective turned on the small T.V. that had been set up at one end of the room and it started to play footage that a security camera had caught of the drug ring they were tracking. Almost instantly Deku started muttering while his pen started flying across the page.

"…obvious mutant type quirk, most likely some kind of fish? No, aquatic mammal. No scales. Most likely can't breathe underwater, then, but probably still weak to fire quirks or dry environments, kind of like Gang Orca. Then some kind of darkness manipulation quirk, does it allow him to make solid objects, or just shadows? Could it be

used to make someone effectively blind? How bright does light have to be to cancel out the ability? Most effective to corner in an enclosed space with bright light, or with other allies to make him hesitant to completely black out the area…"

Deku kept analyzing while the heroes stared at him wide eyed. Yeah, they'd all read Deku's analyses, but it was another thing entirely to see it in person. The video ended after about five minutes and the next started playing automatically. Deku hardly paused in his mutter storm, just continuing his notes where he left off.

Shota pulled his eyes away from Deku when he saw movement in the corner of his eye. Ms. Joke was gesturing to him frantically, widening her eyes and lifting up strands of her long hair before pointing at Deku. Shota looked at her in confusion and she rolled her eyes. *Use your quirk* , she mouthed. Ah. If he had some kind of analysis quirk he didn't know about or was hiding for some reason, it might make sense. It wasn't that Shota didn't believe the kid was quirkless, Tsukauchi didn't call him out on it at least, but it couldn't hurt to have some additional confirmation. Making sure that Deku was still focused on the video and not looking at him, Shota activated his quirk. The rest of the heroes had already noticed the side conversation and were looking at the kid, waiting for any reaction to having his quirk canceled.

Deku didn't even seem to notice Shota's eyes on him, much less a sudden absence of his quirk. His mutter storm continued at the same pace as before and his pen didn't slow down. The kid didn't even stutter. It surprised Shota enough that he blinked and his hair fell in front of his face. The heroes traded glances and Shota could have sworn he saw Ms. Joke mouth *wow.* He agreed full heartedly with the sentiment.

The police had only managed to scrounge up about a half hour of footage from the cartel, but that was enough to fill almost half of Deku's notebook. He put down his pencil and started massaging the stiffness out of his hand.

"Ok, I think I have a good idea of what we're up against. This is a lot more footage than I usually have to work with, so that's nice."

"I'd never thought about that," Mr. Brave said, "I guess we all guessed you were older, so we weren't weren't about how dangerous it must be for you to go out and supplement the videos we send. I am so sorry."

Deku looked confused, “What do you mean supplement?”

Sir Nighteye spoke this time, “You know, hitting the streets, finding the villains in the videos and making your own observations. If I’d known Deku was a kid, I’d never have let you do that.”

Deku looked panicked and flailed his arms again, “I never do that! My mom would kill me and then ground me until I was 80! The videos you send me are usually more than enough, and sometimes I can manage to find some news footage, but I wouldn’t dream of following these guys myself, I promise!”

“You mean all the analyses you’ve sent us are based only on the videos we’ve sent you?” Shota said incredulously. He remembered a few times he only been able to find a minute or so of footage, but Deku had still provided a high quality analysis. From the faces around the table, he wasn’t the only one.

“The Shirakawa murders,” Ms. Joke sounded numb, “I only sent you fifteen seconds of video…”

Deku gave a shaky smile and rubbed the back of his neck, “Yeah, that one was kind of difficult, I couldn’t really find anything else in the news or online either. But the mission worked out ok and you caught the guy, so it wasn’t that bad.” Ms. Joke looked slightly nauseous.

Somehow, the meeting progressed without any more major surprises from Deku and they set up some tentative plans, but mostly things would depend on what happened with the cartel in the next few months. It wasn’t until the meeting was wrapping up that Shota realized that this meeting wasn’t in a safe part of town, which wasn’t a problem for the pro heroes and professional detective in attendance, but *was* a problem for the fourteen year old Deku.

“Kid, do you have someone coming to pick you up?”

Deku shook his head, “We don’t have a car. I just took the train here. You don’t have to worry about me.” Somehow that just made Shota *more* worried.

Tsukauchi seemed to agree with him, “I’ll take him home.”

“You don’t have to do that detective, I’m fine, really.”

“This isn’t for you Deku. I, as a cop, don’t feel comfortable letting a twelve-year-old walk home alone at two in the morning.”

“I’m fourteen!”

“Not helping your case, problem child,” Shota hid his smile behind his capture weapon when Deku had the audacity to look betrayed. He couldn’t help himself, this kid had potential.

Tsukauchi was already grabbing his keys and heading for the door, “If I’m taking you home, I’ll probably need a real name.”

“I already told you that you don’t need to do that,” the kid muttered, but he gave a blinding smile anyway, “I’m Izuku Midoriya.”

As soon as the door was closed, all semblance of professionalism disappeared and Ms. Joke squealed, “He’s so adorable! Did you know he was so adorable Eraser? Why didn’t anyone warn me?”

“Maybe because that ‘adorable’ kid is a good enough analyst to take down a serial killer with only 15 seconds of video,” Nighteye deadpanned. Ms. Joke at least had the good grace to look embarrassed.

“What does it say about us that we legit thought that a fourteen year old was a retired pro for seven months?” Mr. Brave laughed, causing a chain reaction as each of the pros in the room started to chuckle.

Eraser raised one eyebrow, “I think that says more about him than it does about us,” but he still couldn’t stop his smile.

One of the heroes sobered as he realized something, “The fact still stands that Deku is a quirkless teenager and any plans that required him to be on site just went out the window.” The room went silent for a few moments as the heroes considered that.

“Not necessarily,” Nighteye spoke up, “Teenagers can still be onsite if it’s part of an internship.”

“I call dibs!” Ms. Joke yelled. Mr. Brave scowled, “You can’t just call dibs, Joke, he’s not even part of a hero course yet.”

“But he will be,” Shota said, “I have a hard time believing Nezdu would ever pass up a chance to teach someone like Deku, even if he had to get in through the sports festival.” Though that wouldn’t stop Shota from putting his name in for the recommendation exam. That kid needed every advantage he could get.

Reactions

Chapter Summary

> Nedzu reacts to hearing about the quirkless kid who impressed over a dozen pro heroes.
> Izuku reacts to hearing he's been submitted for recommendations.

Chapter Notes

> Hi everyone! Thanks for all the love, kudos, and comments! I am so happy! In other news, I decided to take an ASL class at school, so hopefully that doesn't kill me. But I know how to sign Batman now, so there's that.

Nedzu didn't know what he was expecting when he opened his inbox that morning, maybe another complaint about Togata losing his pants again despite his massive improvement since the sports festival. It certainly wasn't emails from 15 pro heroes, only two of which had ever recommended a student before, all requesting to recommend a single student to UA.

Nedzu sighed. Most likely this Izuku Midoriya had a technology manipulation quirk and was trying to increase his chances. It had been done before, but never this obviously. Oh well, it would be relatively easy to check. The student really should have looked at which pros taught at UA before including Eraserhead on his list of "recommenders". He pressed the intercom, "Aizawa, would you come to my office please."

A few minutes later, his door swung open right as Aizawa was about to knock. The teacher just looked at him unimpressed and said the second thing to surprise the principal that morning, "Is this about the student I submitted for recommendations?"

Nedzu's eyes widened, "You mean it wasn't a fake recommendation?"

Aizawa just glared at him, "Is it that hard to believe that I might take a liking to a kid?"

"No," Nedzu smiled in excitement, "But would you like to explain why 14 other pro heroes also recommended the same student?"

Aizawa swore under his breath, "They all recommended him too?"

Nedzu nodded. Whatever story was behind these recommendations was quickly becoming more interesting. Aizawa just shook his head, “I knew we should have discussed this last night. It’s illogical for everyone to recommend him.” He sighed heavily, “Do you remember when I told you about Deku?”

“I remember you asking if I was the one sending out mysterious analyses if that’s what you mean.”

Aizawa nodded, “Well, he’s gotten quite the reputation in the underground, but no one had ever met him face to face before last night. He’s part of the group that was invited to raid the Doraggo Cartel.”

Nedzu gestured for Aizawa to continue.

“He’s fourteen.”

If Nedzu had been drinking tea, he would have been tempted to do a spit take. He had read some of those analyses. A fourteen year old did that? He could see why so many pros had recommended Midoriya, if he had been there, Nedzu would probably have put in a recommendation of his own.

“I see. I take it he’s already planning on attending UA?”

“Yes, he told us he’s applying to general education, but I think he’d jump at the hero course if he had the opportunity. I can try to give him a pep talk if he needs more convincing, although maybe Mic or Joke would be better for that job. He doesn’t seem to think he can be a hero.”

Nedzu cocked his head to the side, “His analysis is already sought after by working pros, why wouldn’t he think he has what it takes.”

“I get the feeling that he hasn’t had a lot of encouragement from...well, anyone really. He’s quirkless.”

Now Nedzu was really glad he wasn’t currently drinking tea. It wasn’t often that anyone managed to surprise him, and here this Midoriya had managed to do so four times in one hour, and he wasn’t even here!

“Are you sure?” Nedzu had to ask.

Aizawa just looked tired, “I activated my quirk while he was analyzing

a video and I honestly think he didn't even notice. He didn't pause, stutter, or even decrease the quality of his analyses, and Tsukauchi didn't register anything he said as a lie." He paused, "I know that there's never been a quirkless hero before, but if anyone can do it, Deku can. But you and I know just how biased the entrance exam is and he isn't exactly made of muscle. With his mind, I think he'll have a better chance at passing an obstacle course and interview than an all out brawl against robots."

"I agree, I'll send him the invite for the recommendation exam. Does he know you recommended him?"

"No."

"Well, I guess it'll be a surprise then!"

It was definitely a surprise.

"Mom? Do you know why I have a letter from UA?"

Izuku looked at the envelope on the table like it was a bomb, which, for all he knew, it could have been. His mind was moving a mile a minute trying to figure out why in the world UA would be contacting him three whole months before the entrance exam. Was this normal? Was this just saying that they received his application? No, if that was the case then they would have sent it right after he submitted the application months ago. Was something wrong? Were they rejecting him because he was quirkless? That had to be it. Izuku felt his heart sink. Of course the policy allowing quirkless entry was probably a PR ploy. He could already feel the tears fighting to fall from his eyes, making it difficult to see the clear type of his name on the envelope. Of course he wouldn't be able to go to UA. He was an idiot to think otherwise.

"Izuku? Izuku! What's wrong? What did the letter say?"

Izuku's voice was choked with tears, "I don't know, I haven't opened it yet."

The alarmed look in Inko's eyes softened, she knew how bad anxiety could make things seem. She'd struggled with it herself for years, after all. If only she'd been able to give her son a quirk rather than an anxiety disorder. She pushed that thought down along with the guilt that came with it. No use thinking that now, those kinds of thoughts weren't going to do anything to help Izuku through his anxiety

attack.

“Breathe with me Izuku. How about you open the letter before jumping to conclusions about what’s inside?”

Izuku didn’t respond, but he did calm down a little.

“Would you like me to open it for you?”

This time he took a deep breath and shook his head. He still reached out like he was expecting the letter to bite him, but it was better than him crying over a sealed envelope. Izuku was careful not to tear the envelope as he opened it, and Inko watched his face with concern as his eyes tracked along the paper and gradually grew wider and wider with every line.

“…uku? Izuku? Are you ok?”

“They want me to take the recommendation exam.” Izuku said numbly, “They want *me* to take the recommendation exam. Wha? How?”

“Well, that’s…good?” Inko tried to smile through her worries. She had been so happy the last few months since her son had finally seemed to come to terms with the fact that he wouldn’t be a hero. It wasn’t that she didn’t want to support his dreams but…she’d sleep a lot easier at night if she at least knew that he was safe.

“I…I think so, but Mom,” Izuku looked up at her, “The recommendation program is based on *recommendations.* Who would have…?” He trailed off, but Inko could practically see his brain making some connection or another before he whispered, “No…It couldn’t have been. But who else? They wouldn’t have. Not for someone like *me.* Would they?” He seemed to snap out of his reverie, “Mom, I need to message some of my friends, I’ll be in my room, ok?”

Inko just nodded, “o-ok, I’ll tell you when dinner’s ready…”

Izuku smiled but it seemed more like an afterthought. He was still shocked. “Thanks Mom. you’re the best,” before heading off to his room.

Inko picked up the forgotten letter and read it through. It may not be what she wanted, it definitely wasn’t safe, but…if it was really what Izuku wanted…

Could she really say no?

Izuku hurriedly logged on and opened a group message to all the pros who were participating in the raid.

New Group

12857: *(Deku)*

Would anybody care to explain why I got a letter from UA this morning inviting me to take the *HERO COURSE RECOMMENDATION EXAM?!?!?*

Several users are typing…

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Yeah, I might have had something to do with that…

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Wait?! *You* did?! *I* recommended him!

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

We should have discussed it. Nedzu called me into his office and thought it was a prank. It was completely illogical for us *all* to recommend him.

12857: *(Deku)*

!!!!!!!!!!

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

I don't think it's that illogical Eraser. Afterall, he's taking the exam.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

While I see your point, he still would have been invited to take the exam if he only had one recommendation. Any more than that is just inefficient.

12857: *(Deku)*

Hyyuaslkfjasdjfhoaefakjdiekasdeis

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Deku sweetie? Are you ok?!?

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

?

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Oh shit guys. I think we might have killed him!

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Kid, you're scaring us. We need you to tell us if you're ok.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

Tsukauchi took him home, so he knows where the kid lives, right? Who has his number?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

I'll call him.

12857: *(Deku)*

Sorry guys, my mom came in and I had to calm down and explain to her why I was screaming.

Wait! Please tell me you didn't call Tsukauchi!

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

Sorry kid. When you stopped responding we were scared something had happened.

12857: *(Deku)*

@12579! Stop! I'm OK!!!! Please don't call the detective.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

I explained what happened and that it's a false alarm. Sorry for overreacting Deku.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Yeah, sorry dude.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Ditto

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

So why *were* you screaming? Did you see a spider?

12857: *(Deku)*

No! It's just… do you guys really think I could be a hero?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Obviously. Your analysis is better than even most pros are capable of and you choose to use it to help heroes rather than hurt them. You've got more potential than my entire class this year.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

You expelled your entire class this year

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Exactly

12857: *(Deku)*

Why? What I do really isn't that special. It's just a hobby I've had since I was a kid...

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Deku, you had the entire underground convinced that you were a retired pro for like 7 months.

12857: *(Deku)*

I am so sorry! Did I make it sound I like I was a pro? Oh my goodness! I'm so sorry, I'm gonna have to read through all my old messages and make sure and I'm probably gonna get arrested for fraud and impersonating a pro and I am so sorry!

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

OMG! He's freaking out! It's so cute!

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Hahaha! Dude. Deku. Stop freaking out. It was our fault for assuming. No one's gonna arrest you over a misunderstanding...unless Eraser's still on the phone with Tsukauchi?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

If I was I'd have him arrest you, Brave, not Deku

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

I'm more concerned about why you don't believe us?

12857: *(Deku)*

It's just… nobody's ever told me I could be a hero before...it feels...nice?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

...Who do I need to kill?

12857: *(Deku)*

What?!?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Joke, no.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Joke yes!

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

How many pitchforks do I need to bring?

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

Guys, if you make Deku scream again, his mom will be the one planning murder.

12857: *(Deku)*

Thanks guys. It's been fun, but I need to go reevaluate my life now…

12857 has left the chat

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

Are you happy now?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

No, because people haven't been giving my son the love and encouragement he deserves

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

He's not your son

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Does that mean he's yours?

12579 has left the chat

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

At this point, we can't change how people have treated him. All we can do is make sure he knows we believe in him moving forward.

72598 has left the chat

87657 has left the chat

58726 has left the chat

The Recommendation Exam

Chapter Summary

Izuku begins the exam for recommendation students.

Chapter Notes

Hi there! First of all, thank you! I have been overwhelmed by the amount of love this story has been getting. You all are the real heroes.
Next of all, this is the recommendation exam, which is only briefly covered in canon and we don't really see any of the obstacles since Todoroki and Inasa just kinda blow past them all. I based the obstacles off of one shot where Present Mic is announcing and you can kinda see the course behind him, but mostly I just made it up.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Ok, kid, the recommendation exam is in a little over two months. It takes place about a month before the standard exam so that if a student doesn’t make the cut for the recommendation spots, they can still try again with the general population.”

Izuku looked up at Eraserhead from where he was stretching on the floor of the gym, “I guess that makes sense. How many spots are open?”

“Normally, four, although I think Nedzu is looking into making another spot this year due to...extenuating circumstances.”

Izuku frowned, “You mean because people would get mad if a quirkless kid took one of the recommendation spots.”

Aizawa sighed, but nodded, “It’s the world we live in, kid, but we’ll deal with it if we have to. For now, we just need to focus on getting you physically ready so you don’t die. What training have you done so far?”

Izuku thought for a moment, “Well, I mostly focused on my mental abilities, obviously. Then, when you guys started sending me videos, I realized just how physically fit heroes need to be. Even if I’d kind of given up by that point, it was still inspiring. I started lifting weights and jogging, I’ve even tried a little parkour and freerunning, even if

I'm not every good at that yet. I'm a lot stronger than I used to be, but," he hugged himself, "I'm still pretty weak. Sorry."

Aizawa felt his heart break. This kid was doing amazing when you considered that everyone had told him it was impossible to even try, but he still had a long way to go, "Alright, I want you to keep doing what you've been doing. We're not going to be able to make a huge difference in strength in just two months, but we can improve your speed and parkour, as well as get you some combat skills." He gestured for Izuku to stand up, "So, Deku, do you know how to fall or how to take a hit?"

"I mean, I've been hit plenty of times before, so I think I know that one."

Aizawa's expression soured, "That is...not the same thing. I guess that's what we'll start with."

When Izuku went home that night, he was sore and covered in bruises, but couldn't keep the smile off his face. He could do it! He could be a hero! He might not be able to be like All Might, but, the more he thought about it, being an underground hero sounded like more fun anyway.

The next two months flew by. Izuku trained with a different pro-hero every day of the week. Eraser taught him hand to hand combat, Ms. Joke took him on parkour runs, Mr. Brave helped him with speed… it was amazing. Izuku felt so much stronger and even if he couldn't hold his own against Eraser yet, he wasn't falling into dumpsters as often as he had when he was doing parkour on his own. The morning of the recommendation exam, Izuku opened his computer to find dozens of good luck messages. Apparently, word had gotten around that Deku was a lot younger than anyone had thought, and they were all excited for him. It was contagious. Not that he wouldn't have been excited without the messages, he still would have been, it's just...he'd probably be a lot more nervous than excited.

Inko waved to Izuku as he left, then let her hand fall as soon as he was out of sight. Her baby, off to go be a hero. As she wiped the tears from her eyes, even she didn't know if they were happy tears or sad ones.

"You'll have three hours for the written portion of the exam. Begin!"

Izuku sat in the auditorium with the other students after the written portion. He didn't think he got 100% because he probably got at least a few questions wrong in the English portion, but there had been a hero analysis essay at the end that, while optional, would probably bring up his score. But that wasn't what he was worried about.

"Hello, listeners! Rock On! The written part of the recommendation test is over! The practical's next, and then, finally, the interview!" Izuku resisted the urge to mutter like a fanboy as the voice hero explained, "This portion will be a three kilometer obstacle course run in groups of six. We will be looking not only at your times, but at your ingenuity and use of your quirks, so please go all out! As you leave the auditorium, please take a number from either Midnight or Snipe, these will determine what group you'll be in for the race. Any questions? Alright! Let's go!"

As they slowly filed out of the auditorium, Izuku looked around him and tried to evaluate the quirks of those around him. There were a few obvious mutant quirks, but there were some like a boy with a skull face and other with two toned hair that weren't as obvious. Some didn't appear to have physical manifestations of their quirks at all. Izuku tried to calm his breathing. No matter what, he knew that all of them had strong quirks, they wouldn't have been recommended otherwise, and soon Izuku would have to face them. He counted his blessings that he wouldn't be facing them in combat. Even with two months of training, he still ended up on his back most of the time and he wasn't sure he was ready to face people using their quirks quite yet.

The first group was called up and went to the starting line. Present Mic nodded to Snipe, who pointed his gun to the sky and fired. The six were off quickly and Izuku felt his stomach sink as he saw their quirks. They were amazing! Izuku couldn't possibly compete! One boy controlled the wind to blow him forward while leaving his opposition in dust. Another stayed neck and neck with him by skating on ice that he shot from his foot. To Izuku, it seemed like the race was over before it even began, with the wind user finishing just barely ahead of the ice guy. Even Present Mic seemed shocked.

He forced himself to pay attention as the next group ran the course, thankfully much slower since this group didn't have anyone with quirks that allowed them to completely ignore all the obstacles. They all used their quirks creatively and Izuku tried not to think about what everyone else would think when he didn't use a quirk at all during the exam.

“Hey, are you ok?” Izuku jerked up to see a girl with a high ponytail looking at him with concern, “You were breathing kind of fast.”

“Uhh…yeah,” Izuku said, “I guess I’m just kinda nervous. Everyone here has such amazing quirks.”

The girl laughed, “Yeah, I guess so. My name is Momo Yaoyorozu. You?”

“Izuku Midoriya.”

“Nice to meet you Midoriya. My group’s next, wish me luck.”

Izuku nodded as she left and went to the starting line. This time he watched carefully to see how everyone used their quirks to make it past the obstacles. Yaoyorozu apparently had some sort of creation quirk because she pulled a pair of roller blades from nowhere to breeze past the flat sections and made a spring loaded grappling hook to fly up the cliff. Another used her oil secretion quirk to slide more quickly down the slide and make the track more slick for the other examinees.

With each group that went, Izuku got more and more ideas on how to pass the obstacles and he got more and more excited. He even saw opportunities where students were underutilizing their quirks and got ideas to help them improve. Yeah, he couldn’t replicate any of their quirks, but he could take the best ideas from all of them and get a decent time.

Finally, it was Izuku’s turn to be called and he took a deep breath as he walked to the starting line. He bounced on his toes as ideas bounced around his mind on how to clear the obstacles. The moment Snipe’s gun went off, he ran toward the first obstacle, which looked like the first hill of a roller coaster. Other students were already starting to climb up the side as Izuku reached the base of it and looked around. He smiled as he grabbed a small board from the base and tucked it inside his shirt, then started climbing up toward the apex.

Most of the students were climbing straight across, rather than up, and they were already on the second half, while some had already cleared the obstacle. Izuku hoped this gamble would pay off and that Eraser wouldn’t kill him if he fell before he pulled himself up to stand on top of the wooden structure. He pulled out the board he’d brought and set it on thin metal track that lined the top, then carefully stood on top of it as if it was a skateboard, pinwheeling his arms as he almost lost his balance. With a quick prayer, he shoved off and began to slide down

the hill, rocketing past the two students who were still climbing, putting him in fourth place.

He hit the ground with a roll when he reached the end of the track and looked at the next obstacle, which involved hopping from different sized pillars that ascended up to a thin wall. Unfortunately, there wasn't anything he could do to speed this up, but he was grateful for his parkour training as he jumped easily, maintaining his place in the running.

The next obstacle was a thin cement wall about the width of a balance beam that students were running across. Izuku stood in shock for a moment as he watched the second place examinee, a blue haired boy with engines in his legs, literally glide across the wall on his heels. Was he related to Ingenium? Izuku shook his head and started running.

The next obstacle wasn't so much of an obstacle as a slide that dumped into a pool of water. Izuku thought back to the engine boy who had been gliding on his heels. If he could reduce the surface that touched the slide, he could reduce friction and move faster! He also remembered the girl with the oil quirk from a few rounds before and looked quickly.. *there.* A line on the left half of the slide was slightly more shiny than the rest from where she had made it more slick. Izuke laid down and pushed off, lifting his body so that only his heels and shoulders were touching the slide. The decreased friction combined with the oil and he managed to pass another examinee, putting him in third place.

He swam quickly toward the next obstacle, a cliff face that went straight up. He didn't have a grappling hook like Yaoyorozu did, but he had seen her drop it when she'd cleared the cliff. He took a deep breath and dived. Sure enough, there it was, sitting at the bottom of the pool. He grabbed it and pulled himself up onto the ledge at the bottom of the cliff. He took a moment to familiarize himself with his new tool, then looked up. The obstacle after the cliff climb was a rope strung across two spires, then climbing down the second spire to arrive at the top of a plateau. Izuku thought for a moment before aiming. Hopefully he wouldn't be penalized for this.

He smiled as he felt it catch, then braced himself and pressed the button to retract it. He was yanked from his location, flew past both the cliff climb and the rope bridge, and hit the side of the plateau. Hard. Izuku groaned as he pulled himself up and took note of where the other students were. He was now in second place.

He couldn't see the first place examinee, but he'd seen all previous examinees disappear for a minute before reemerging from the waterfall, so he assumed there was some sort of cave. He paused as he saw a narrow fissure in the middle of the plateau, with rock climbing holds on both sides going down. The gap was only about four feet wide in most areas, and Izuku was just over five feet tall so… he nodded resolutely, then braced himself with an arm and a leg on either side of the fissure and shimmied down as quickly as he could.

At the bottom of the fissure was a short tunnel that Izuku would have to army crawl through and the first examinee had just entered it. Thankfully, the tunnel was wide enough for multiple people. Izuku got down on his stomach and moved as quickly as he could, passing the first place examinee at the very end of the tunnel.

There was a waterfall in front of them and Izuku ran straight toward it without pausing. He'd seen plenty of others run out of the waterfall in the previous rounds. The water was cold and almost knocked him over, but he kept running until he could breathe again.

From here it was a straight shot to the finish line. Izuku ran as hard as he could, hearing the footsteps of the other examinee as he struggled to catch up. There was a cry behind him and Izuku heard the sound of engines. No! Mini-Ingenium! Izuku pushed himself harder. Almost there…

But Mini-Ingenium was too fast on a straight-away and he zoomed past Izuku, who crossed the finish line a full five seconds after. Gasping for breathe and fighting tears. Second place. Good, but not good enough. He needed to be the best if he was going to prove that a quirkless student belonged in the hero course.

"Hey, Midoriya!" Yaoyorozu was at his side, "That was amazing! I hadn't even considered that anyone else would try to use my grappling hook! I wish I'd thought to bypass an obstacle like that!"

"That was shameful!" Mini-Ingenium cried, chopping his hands through the air, "You are supposed to use your own quirk! Not coast by on the work of others!"

Izuku felt his heart sink. Mini-Ingenium was right, he wouldn't have done half as well if he hadn't paid attention to the other rounds and used them to his advantage. He really was worthless, wasn't he? Why did he think he deserved this?

"Hey now, listener, don't be so hard on him!" Present Mic interrupted,

“We told everyone to go all out and this examinee showed great creativity and used the environment to his advantage, an essential trait for any hero. Not everyone has physical quirks, ya know?”

Mini-Ingenium straightened, “My apologies.” He bowed to Midoriya, “I see that I was in the wrong. On further consideration it really was truly impressive how you managed to get ahead of the other examinees. My name is Tenya Iida, what is yours?”

Izuku’s eyes widened. He didn’t think anyone had ever apologized to him before, “I-izuku M-midoriya!” he stuttered out, “Nice to meet you!”

Mini-Ingenium, Iida, smiled, “It is a pleasure to meet you as well!”

“All right!” Present Mic Yelled, “Now don’t get too down if you didn’t get first in the obstacle courses. We’ll be deciding who gets the recommendation spots based on a combination of the written, physical, and interview! So if you did poorly, don’t lose hope! And if you did well, don’t get too comfortable! Now go! Get to the locker rooms and get cleaned up! Interviews will be in Principal Nedzu’s office in 30 minutes. Don’t be late!”

Chapter End Notes

> I think you all noticed that I had Iida take the recommendation exam! This is a personal headcanon of mine because he *comes from a family of heroes! Of course he would be submitted for recommendations! But unfortunately, there are a limited number of recommendation spots, so he didn't quite make the cut and had to take the general exam if he still wanted to go to UA.*

The Interview

Chapter Summary

The interview portion of the recommendation exam.

Chapter Notes

Wow, Iida sure got a lot of hate last chapter, didn't he? I'll have to come back to that and explore how he'll interact with Izuku once school starts.
Also, over 1000 kudos? I'm shocked!

All the examinees sat awkwardly in the lobby outside Nedzu's office, waiting for their turn to be called. The atmosphere was tense not only because everyone was nervous, but because the boy with the wind quirk kept glaring at the boy with the ice quirk, who didn't seem to notice and kept staring straight ahead. Izuku couldn't think of why the Wind was so angry at Ice, considering that Wind won their round of the physical, but he figured there must be a good reason. Unless of course Wind was like Kacchan and just angry all the time, that was always a possibility. Better give him a wide berth.

"So…" A girl with green hair broke the silence, "That physical was something else, right?"

"Yeah," another examinee laughed, "Some serious American Ninja Warrior stuff. Do you really think we'll have to climb that much as heroes? My arms are still sore!"

"I think it'll depend on what kind of hero you want to be," Izuku hadn't even realized he'd opened his mouth until everyone was looking at him. Oh no. He hurried on in a panic, "I mean, well, daylight heroes probably don't have to climb as much since most daytime villains are on street level, but it's very helpful for underground heroes to get a birds eye view of situations and they spend most of their time patrolling from the rooftops rather than the street. Daylight heroes stay on the street so that people can see them, so they don't have much use for climbing, except for maybe in a rescue situation and...I'll shut up now."

Izuku's face was hot in embarrassment and he looked at the floor as the rest of the examinees stared at him.

“I’d never thought of it that way,” Yaoyorozu said, and Izuku shot her a grateful look, “ I’m planning on being a spotlight hero myself. I never really hear about underground heroes, so I sometimes forget they exist.”

“That’s kind of the point of underground heroes, though, isn’t it? So that no one really knows they exist?” The green haired girl spoke up, “I’ve considered going that route, but I’m not really sure. My quirk is kinda gross, so I’m not sure I’d ever be very popular anyway.”

Izuku perked up, “Your quirk involves disconnecting your limbs, right? I saw you use it a few times during the practical. How much muscle control do you have over a body part when it’s disconnected? What would happen if a body part was injured or destroyed when it wasn’t connected…” Izuku realized he was rambling and quickly slammed his mouth shut.

The green haired girl sat in shock for a moment before responding, “Uhh… yeah. My quirk is called Lizard Tail Splitter and it allows me to disconnect any part of my body at will. I can split into up to 50 pieces at a time.” Her right hand disconnected and scuttered toward Izuku and up his arm, poking him in the cheek, “I can fully control them, even disconnected, and levitate them. If any are destroyed, I can regenerate them, but it takes a lot of energy, so I prefer to just call them back if I can.”

“That’s so cool!” Izuku gushed, “That would be great for underground work. Most villains wouldn’t think to look for an eye or an ear hiding in the corner of a room, so your quirk would be perfect for intelligence gathering. It would also probably be useful for sabotage, since a hand could easily fit into small spaces. You’ll make a wonderful underground hero if you choose, but don’t just do it because you think your quirk is gross.”

She smiled widely, “Thanks! I’d never thought of it like that!”

Izuku nodded, “Yaoyorozu, your quirk is some kind of creation, right? That grappling hook was really complicated, but you made it no problem. What kind of objects can you create?”

Yaoyorozu smiled, “My quirk is called Creation. I can transform the lipids in my body into any non-living thing I want, but I have to understand the molecular structure. I’ve been studying chemistry since I first developed my quirk, so I can produce any element on the periodic table fairly easily as well as most known molecules. It’s just a

question of how they all come together."

Most of the other examinees were paying attention to the conversation now and they were quick to pipe up with their own observations of Yaoyorou's quirk. After that, another person piped up and soon everyone was sharing their quirks. Even Wind and Ice had been roped into the discussion.

"Yeah! My quirk is Whirlwind! I can control any wind and I am super passionate about hero work!" Izuku was almost physically blown back by the sheer energy that Wind put off. Ok, so being constantly angry like Kacchan was out, but if he said passion was so important, it was easy to see why he didn't like Ice, who remained blank-faced and probably didn't express passion for anything.

Now it was Ice's turn. He paused for a moment, then said flatly, "My quirk is called Half-Hot, Half-Cold. I can produce ice from my right side and fire from my left, but I don't use my fire." His tone clearly communicated that he was done talking and everyone sat awkwardly for a moment as they digested his declaration. Wind was glaring at him again with even more intensity than before.

"Well, that's cool then," Yaoyorozu said finally, then turned to Izuku, "What about you Midoriya, what's your quirk? It wasn't really obvious from the physical round."

Izuku's stomach sunk. Of course they were going to ask about his quirk. These were the first people that acted like they could be friends since he'd gotten his quirk, well, besides the underground heroes, but did they really count since they were all so much older than him? They'd reject him as soon as they knew, everyone did. How was he going to get out of this?

All of a sudden, the door to Nedzu's office opened and an examinee walked out, followed by the principal himself, "Izuku Midoriya?"

Izuku nodded in relief and practically ran into the office. Nedzu smiled knowingly and shut the door behind him.

"Have a seat! So you're the famous Deku I've heard so much about? To tell you the truth, I was quite surprised to hear that you were so young."

Izuku sat down across from the principal and nodded, "I honestly wasn't trying to trick anyone," he laughed, "I freaked out when I realized how old Eraser and everyone thought I was! I thought it

would be obvious from my analysis that I was just a fanboy."

Nedzu poured two cups of tea and took a sip, "I've read some of your analyses. They are extremely impressive."

Izuku shook his head quickly, "They're really not. They're just a fanboy's rambling and I have no idea why heroes like them so much. Everyone else seems to think they're creepy…"

"Well," Nedzu clapped his hands together, "While we're on the subject, perhaps you wouldn't mind giving me a brief analysis of your fellow examinees?"

Izuku's eyes lit up as he started to wander, "Well, um, there's Yaoyorozu, she's got a creation quirk that is super cool. It wouldn't be easy to use, but she's put in a massive amount of work learning chemistry so that she can create pretty much anything. The only weaknesses I can see are maybe how fast she can think under pressure. Also if she has to create a lot in a short amount of time, i'm not sure she has the fat stores for that. Then there's the girl with the lizard tail quirk, she can separate her body parts, which would be perfect for intelligence gathering…"

The interview continued with Izuku rambling as Nedzu listened and sipped his tea, occasionally interrupting with an observation or question. Before Izuku knew it, a half hour had passed and there were two empty cups of tea sitting on the desk.

"Well, Deku, thank you." Nedzu stood and walked around the desk, "You may go rejoin the other applicants outside, or you may go home if you wish."

"Wait, the interview is over?" Izuku looked confused, "But I just did some analysis, which I was going to do for fun anyway? Isn't the interview supposed to be difficult? Aren't you supposed to ask why I deserve a place at UA? Why I deserve to be a hero?"

Nedzu looked at him curiously, "Your analysis is a valuable skill and I never doubted that you were 'deserving' as you put it. Would you prefer the interview were more difficult?"

Izuku waved his hands, "Well, no, it's just…" He rubbed the back of his neck, "This just felt like tea with a friend."

Nedzu's eyes brightened and he smiled, "Then I hope we can do this again sometime, regardless of your results."

Izuku returned the smile and Nedzu led him back out into the lobby and grabbed the next student and just like that, his entrance exam was over.

Acceptance

Chapter Summary

Izuku gets his letter from UA

Chapter Notes

We reached 10,000 hits, people! This is not a drill! I repeat! This is not a drill!
Also, I just made up Mr. Brave's civilian name. Thought you ought to know.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku had an anxiety attack everyday, right before the mail came. He tried to tell himself that it was just a letter, that it wasn't important and wasn't worth getting worked up over. But it wasn't just a letter, was it? It was a letter from UA, a letter that would determine his future, a letter that would tell him whether or not he was worthy to be a hero. And… there it was, the anxiety attack was back. Izuku sighed. He thought he'd already done this today, why did he have to do it again?

It had been a week since the entrance exam and there still wasn't a letter. Not that the letter couldn't come later than a week after the exam. Present Mic had said in the introduction that letters normally came between five days to two weeks after, but...Izuku just wanted this over with already. It was torture just waiting, not knowing if he was good enough or not!

There was a knock at the door.

"Izuku!" His mom called out, "Could you get the door? My hands are full making dinner!"

"Ok, Mom!" He got up from the couch and opened the door, only to do a double take when he saw who it was.

"Hey kid," Eraser said, "We brought you something. Can we come in?"

Izuku stood aside in shock, allowing Eraser, Ms. Joke, and Mr. Brave, all in civilian garb, to come inside.

"Sorry Nighteye couldn't come," Ms. Joke said, "He's in the middle of

a major case right now."

"Yeah, right," Brave laughed, "The old man's just a spoil sport."

"Mom?" Izuku said as he walked into the kitchen, the three pro heroes trailing close behind, "Um, these are my friends. This is Eraserhead, Ms. Joke, and Mr. Brave."

Inko's eyes widened, "These are the pro hero friends you told me about when you were recommended, right?" When Izuku nodded, she bowed, "Thank you all for being so kind to my son. I was so excited when he told me he had friends, so imagine my shock a few months ago when I learned that all his friends were pro heroes!"

Eraser raised an eyebrow. He suspected that Izuku didn't get a lot of encouragement to be a hero, but *all his friends*? She was probably exaggerating.

"He's a great kid, Midoriya-san." Ms. Joke laughed, "We're lucky to have met him. By the way, since I'm not in costume right now, you can just call me Emi Fukukado."

"Nice to meet you Fukukado-san."

"Yeah, me too!" Mr. Brave said, "My name is Haruto Nakamura."

The other two looked at Eraser, who stared back for a minute before sighing, "I'm Shota Aizawa. Deku's a smart kid, you must be proud of him."

Inko's face soured slightly at the nickname, but it was almost too fast for the pros to catch before she was smiling again, "I am! I wish he would pick a better career path though… heroics isn't very forgiving for someone like Izuku."

Izuku looked like he wanted to sink into the floor as the room went cold. *Fix this,* "Umm, so why are you guys, here? Um.. not that you're not welcome, you totally are, it's just that you've never come over before and you guys sounded like you planned it, but I didn't know about it, unless i forgot. Oh no! Did I forget?"

Mr. Brave, *Nakamura,* laughed, "No Deku, you didn't forget. We wanted to surprise you! Show him Eraser!"

Aizawa rolled his eyes, but had a small smile as he reached into his pocket and took out an envelope.

“My UA letter!”

Aizawa handed it to the kid, who looked at it with wide eyes, “Of course, kid. Did you forget I work at UA? We wanted to be here when you open it.”

Izuku looked to his mother, who smiled sadly, “You and your friends go open it in the living room. I’ll keep working on dinner and you all can come eat after, ok?”

Izuku nodded and went back to sit on the couch. Aizawa sat beside him, while Nakamura sat on the chair and Fukukado made her home on the floor. All three looked at Izuku in anticipation and he took a deep breath before tearing open the envelope. He then promptly started crying.

“Oh no! Eraser! I thought you said it was good news! I’m going to kill you!” Fukukado screamed!

Aizawa looked slightly panicked, “It is good news! I don’t know why he’s crying, I swear!”

“I-I’m just so happy!” Izuku choked out, saving Aizawa from being physically wrestled to the floor, “I-I made it! I’m going to UA! I’m gonna be a hero!”

“Congratulations, Deku!” Nakamura said, “You deserve it!”

Fukukado gave him a big hug, “Oh, I’m so excited for you! I kinda wish you were coming to Ketsubutsu with me, but you’re gonna need Nedzu to help you with that big brain of yours." She sighed. "Oh well, there’s still internships, and I’m sure you’ll hear about me all the time since Eraser’s madly in love with me!”

“No, I’m not.” Aizawa denied, “Stop telling people that, Joke.”

“It’s not a joke, I am!” Fukukado laughed loudly and tried to mess up Aizawa’s hair, but he dodged and scowled at her. She responded by sticking out her tongue.

“I swear even Deku is more mature than you.”

“Maturity is overrated.” Nakamura said, then crossed his eyes and pulled a face, making Izuku giggle.

Aizawa looked dead inside, “You’re all impossible. I hate all of you.”

“Except for Joke!” Nakamura said, “You *love* her!”

Izuku laughed even harder. So this is what having friends really felt like. Somehow when Joke teased, it didn’t feel the same as when Kacchan did it. It wasn’t hurtful at all, it was just friends giving each other a hard time. It was nice.

“Dinner’s ready,” Inko looked to where her son was laughing on the floor with his friends. Even if she didn’t want him to be a hero, she thought she could deal with it if it meant he had friends like these.

“Thanks, Mom!” Izuku led his friends back to the kitchen and they all sat down.

“Thanks for the food, Midoriya-san!” Fukukado said as they dug in.

“Yeah, this tastes amazing.” Nakamura added.

Inko smiled, “It’s really the least I could do. And besides, we have to celebrate my baby boy getting into his dream school.” She leveled a serious look at Aizawa, “I trust you’ll take care of him and make sure he stays safe.”

Aizawa nodded solemnly, “Of course Midoriya-san, I would never send Deku into a situation he wasn’t prepared for. When we take him along on internships, we’ll always be with him to protect him if things get dangerous. Deku may be smarter than most pros, but he’s still a student, and he’ll be treated accordingly.”

“Good,” Inko sighed, “I’ll hold you to that, Aizawa-san.”

“So Eraser, I guess you can’t expel your whole class this semester,” Brave smiled, “because that would mean expelling Deku too.”

“You expelled a whole class?” Inko was wide eyed.

Aizawa put down his fork, “I only expel kids who have no potential. It’s cruel to let them continue when they’ll only end up getting themselves or others killed. I won’t expel Deku because he has potential. I wouldn’t have recommended him otherwise.”

“I find it hard to believe that an entire class was completely devoid of potential,” Izuku insisted, “They must have had strong quirks.”

“You’re living proof that quirks aren’t everything,” Aizawa said, “They might have had strong quirks, but their personalities convinced me

they didn't have what it takes. Spoiled brats every single one of them. No one had ever told them no and let them get away with murder just because of their quirks. That's not how you raise a hero. Heroes have to be willing to protect people and give their all, not just coast by or be the best."

Izuku couldn't help but think of Kacchan. Everyone praised him no matter what he did simply because his quirk was perfect for heroics. But, Eraser couldn't be talking about people like Kacchan, could he? Afterall, Kacchan would be an amazing hero.

"Most teachers aren't as strict on expulsions as Eraser here, Midoriya-san," Fukukado explained, "I teach at another hero school and I probably expel maybe one student a year? Sometimes I don't expel any at all, it all depends on the class. But then again, Ketsubutsu isn't as competitive as UA."

"Oh, that's good I guess. One of Izuku's oldest friends is going to be applying to UA as well, and I wouldn't want to have to deal with Mitsuki if her son gets expelled!"

"Don't worry about Kacchan, Mom. I'm sure he won't have any problem getting in, and I know he'll be the best hero!"

Inko smiled, "You're right. It's silly to worry! Who knows, maybe you two will be in the same class!"

Aizawa hoped he was imagining the tension that came into Deku's shoulders at that, "Maybe…"

"No matter what, you'll probably make some of the best friends you've ever had in hero school," Nakamura said, "I know I did."

"Maybe you'll find someone you have instant chemistry with, like me and Eraser." Fukukado said while Aizawa rolled his eyes.

"Oh, are you together?" Inko asked, "How did you two meet?"

"We're not…" Aizawa started, but Fukukado interrupted him.

"Our agencies were nearby when we were first starting out. In between missions and drama, a mutual love blossomed!"

"No it didn't" Aizawa muttered. Nakamura and Izuku snickered.

"That sounds so romantic." Inko sighed.

“We aren’t dating, Midoriya-san.” Aizawa said.

“Not yet,” Fukukado said, “but don’t worry, Midoriya-san, I’ll win him over eventually.”

A mischievous glint came into Inko’s eye as she looked between the two and Aizawa gulped.

“It’s alright, Fukukado-san, I understand completely,” Inko said, “Did you know that I had known Izuku’s father for almost a year by the time he realized I was flirting with him?”

“Mom!” Izuku cried out in betrayal. Fukukado just laughed.

“Well, at least we’ve passed that stage of the courtship! I doubt Eraser could ignore my flirting.”

“Neither can anyone else, that’s the problem.” Aizawa said.

“Oh, so you want me to be more subtle in my affections! I can do that!”

Aizawa just sighed as everyone laughed at him, “Deku, don’t encourage her.”

“Why not?” Izuku said innocently, “You two are so cute together!”

This made Nakamura spit out his drink as Aizawa looked betrayed, “I trusted you, Deku. I trusted you and you stabbed me in the back and left me with *her*. ”

“That was amazing, Deku!” Fukukado held out her hand for a fist bump, which Izuku took her up on, “And don’t be so dramatic, Eraser! I’ll win you over eventually and you know it.”

Aizawa just sighed and shook his head, “More like you’ll wear me down. Your way of flirting is like a war of attrition.” he turned to look at Izuku as he pointedly changed the subject, “So Deku, we need to talk about internship options.”

“Don’t internships happen after school starts?” Inko asked.

“Normally, yes. Your son, however, is a special case. He’s been working with us in an advisory role for several months at this point and there is a raid coming up that we invited him on before knowing how young he is. We still think that his input will be essential, but he’ll need to be part of an official internship in order to come.” Inko

looked worried. “We will make sure he stays safe while still allowing him to contribute to the mission.”

“Internships for first years normally only last a week, and we’ve been arguing non-stop about who gets to take you.” Fukukado said, “One of the options we’ve thought of is having you do a few different internships in the next two months leading up to the raid. That way, you’d get more intensive training to make sure you’re ready and we can all stop fighting!”

Izuku’s eyes went wide, “That sounds amazing! Can I, Mom? Please?”

Inko looked at him for a long moment before caving, “You’re sure that these internships will help him be safe?” The three heroes nodded, “Then ok, but don’t put yourself in any more danger than you need to and listen to the heroes, ok?”

“Ok!” He hugged her tightly, “Thank you so much, Mom!”

“Thanks for dinner, Midoriya-san. Congratulations, Deku!” Fukukado said as the heroes left, “See you for training and internships.”

“And don’t forget there’s a planning meeting Saturday,” Nakamura said, “Detective Tsukauchi’ll be picking you up.”

“I still don’t understand why I can’t just walk…” Izuku said sullenly.

“It’s because you’re still a kid,” Aizawa ruffled Izuku’s hair, “Problem child.”

Chapter End Notes

> Since my stories are becoming so popular, I thought you might like it if I shared my tumblr. Just so you know, I only have one blog, so it's multifandom. It's got a lot of miraculous ladybug, dragon prince, good omens, and of course my hero academia!

Is this supposed to be a Joke?

Chapter Summary

Izuku's internship with Ms. Joke.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Thought you might like to know that this is officially the most popular story I've ever written!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“So, Deku, you ready for your first internship?”

Izuku nodded as Ms. Joke led the way into the agency she shared with several other underground pros. He couldn’t believe he was actually going to be staying the week, learning how to be a hero! Yeah, he knew he’d made it into UA, but this just felt more real, somehow.

“Ok, we’ll drop your bag off in your room, then our support department wants to meet you.”

“Support department? Like the people who make your weapons?”

Joke nodded, “That’s part of what they do, but there’s more too. The support department of a hero agency provides us with costumes, gear, and weapons, but they also do analysis, help us track down villains, and gather evidence to turn in to the police. Basically, kind of what you’ve been doing so far. That’s why they’re so eager to meet you.”

“O-ok.”

Joke led him up several floors to where they had several small rooms for internship purposes and let him drop off all his stuff before going to another floor and leading him down a long hallway to a dark room filled with various monitors and a team of people Izuku had never seen before.

“Hey everyone!”

“Hey Joke! Who’s the kid?”

“Oh him?” Joke smiled and pulled him out from where he had been trying to hide behind her, “This is Deku!”

Izuku gave a hesitant wave as the team stared at him.

“That’s Deku?”

“I heard Deku was young, it’s just...he’s tiny!”

Izuku shrunk in on himself as the whispers continued. Of course, even *Deku* was cooler than him. He shouldn’t have come. Maybe it wasn’t too late to tell Joke he wanted to go home. He felt Joke put a hand on his shoulder and he looked up at her.

She was smiling, “Why don’t you go show ‘em what you got?” She said softly. “Hey, you got any videos Deku here can analyze?”

One of the support team pulled up a video from earlier that day and pressed play before Izuku could even get out his notebook.

“A bullet quirk...but why are the bullets ricocheting like that? They seem to be breaking the laws of physics. Maybe a telekinesis quirk? Is that her quirk or does she have a partner? She doesn’t look betrayed when she’s arrested, so probably no partner then. Most likely she brings along a limited number of bullets, then pretends to have a bullet quirk so people are more wary of her. Still, the speeds she’s able to move them are really impressive…”

“Wow…” Izuku stopped and tried to stomp down his embarrassment at being caught muttering, “It really is Deku…”

“What? Did ya think I’d lie to ya?” Joke laughed.

“I mean, you do have a tendency to pull pranks, so…”

“Ha! That’s fair! But I’m telling ya, the kid’s the real deal. Nearly gave us all a heart attack the first time we saw him though. We were expecting some grey beard, then in walks a baby!”

The team laughed and Izuku joined in. He really should be used to people being surprised at his age by now, but he still couldn’t figure out why. His analysis really wasn’t that spectacular, they were just being nice.

“So, Deku’s here on an internship and he’s not cleared for combat yet, but I’d like him to have an earpiece so I can talk to him during patrols.”

One of the support team members nodded and fiddled with something

for a minute before handing it to Izuku, “That’s a standard Hero Commision earpiece, plus some. It will allow you to talk to the rest of the team, mostly just Joke and then probably one of us, and it will allow us to see your location at all times.”

Izuku put it in his ear and smiled at Joke, who laughed and put an arm around his shoulder, “Looking good, kid! You’re all official now!”

“So Deku,” someone asked, “I have to ask, when and how did you get started on analysis? Who taught you?”

“Well,” Izuku replied, “I first started when I was about four, I…” He was about to say he thought it would help make up for his quirklessness, but he wasn’t quite ready to have all that out in the open yet, “I thought it might help me become a hero. I had my heart set on it even back then. I guess it worked!” That made everyone laugh, “To answer your other question, no one taught me. I just watched the news and started making notes on what I saw.” He shrugged, “I don’t even want to look back at my first one. I’ve still got it, but I’m fairly certain I wrote at least half of it in crayon.”

There was complete silence and Izuku turned to see every member of the support team staring at him with open mouths, while Joke simply smiled proudly. What happened, did he say something wrong?

“Oh my goodness…” one of them grabbed a notebook and pen that had been sitting on the desk, “Deku, I *need* your autograph. I don’t care that you’re going to be an underground hero, I just, that’s amazing.”

“O-ok?” Izuku looked up at Joke, who nodded, then took the paper, “Do I sign as Deku or my real name?”

“You go by Deku professionally, so I’d probably use that one.” Joke said, “I sign everything as Ms. Joke because no one knows who Emi Fukukado is!” She laughed.

Izuku smiled, “I did.”

“ *You* don’t count.” She ruffled his hair as he signed the notebook and gave it back.

“I’d actually like to ask you guys a few questions while we’re here,” He said.

The head of the support team nodded, “That’s what we’re here for.

Shoot."

"So about Ms. Joke's laugh mask, did you design it or did a support firm? Does it work by focusing her quirk like Present Mic's directional speaker or does it completely neutralize the quirk. If it doesn't, can it? How do you…"

They stayed for another hour or so while Izuku asked dozens of questions and the support team asked a few of their own. Ms. Joke just smiled proudly the whole time. She was thrilled to have gotten Deku first for internships, but the other heroes couldn't argue. She *had* called dibs, after all.

Deku just looked so *happy* . In moments like this, it was hard to remember that no one had ever encouraged him, that he curled in on himself to make himself a smaller target, or that he stuttered and flinched whenever he realized he'd been rambling.

By the time they left the support room, Izuku had filled up half a notebook. In his arms, he held the earpiece as well as a plain black jumpsuit they'd given him. He didn't have a hero costume yet, so he'd just have to make do with that until he figured out what he wanted. Izuku didn't even know what he wanted for his hero costume. All his old designs had been heavily inspired by All Might, but that was too painful now and besides, he wasn't going to be a hero like All Might.

"Ms. Joke?" He asked hesitantly, "How did you decide on your hero costume?"

Joke hummed and brought a finger to her chin as she thought, "Well, it wasn't simple and my first costume looked almost nothing like this. At first, I thought I wanted something like a clown, but I just couldn't get it to work. Honestly, I don't know exactly what started me on the pirate motiff, I just kinda stumbled on the stripes and it kinda grew from there. Besides that, some of it's functional, like I didn't start with a bandana, but my hair kept falling in my face during spars in hero training. Same with my gloves. I didn't think I'd ever use brass knuckles, but the support department at my school suggested them and I found that they really gave me an edge, especially since I had boxing training." She shrugged, "I guess you just start with something that sounds cool, then it grows from there as you get more experience and figure out what you need. Why? You thinking about what you want?"

Izuku nodded, "I had some ideas when I was a kid, but my goals are

different now. I don't need to be flashy, I just want to make people feel safe…"

"Except for the villains," Ms. Joke teased.

"Except for the villains." Izuku agreed. He hummed, "I wonder...would it be better to have an intimidating costume to scare villains, or something cuter to comfort victims…?"

"Well, for underground heroes, it's often better to scare the villains. You won't be doing as much rescue work as heroes like the Pussycats or Thirteen, but that doesn't mean you can completely ignore how the victims see you, either. I don't mean to say your costume has to be *cute* , heroes like Edgeshot can be comforting to civilians while still looking cool." she shrugged, "I don't know what to tell you, kid. You kind of have to find a balance. What's going to look intimidating to villains while comforting civilians?"

Izuku thought for a moment, "If I had to say...I'd almost want to say *epic.* "

Joke laughed, "Well, when you figure out how to transfer that into visuals, let me know."

Izuku smiled. Yeah, epic seemed like a good start.

//

"All right," Ms. Joke put her hands on her hips and looked Izuku in the eye, "here are the rules. Interns are allowed to tag along on patrols, but you *have* to do what I tell you to, ok?" Izuku nodded.

"Rule number one is *no combat* , we'll probably run into a few villains tonight, but I'm the one who'll be fighting them. You'll be staying on the rooftops or in the shadows, analyzing the situation and making observations but *not fighting* , are we clear?"

Izuku nodded, but hesitated, "What if you're in trouble and need help."

"Then you run and contact the support team. They'll send another pro to assist me, but you stay away." She sighed, "I know it sounds harsh, but even if you don't have a quirk, you could still get in trouble if you step in. The only times you're allowed to fight are if your life is in danger or I give you explicit permission in an emergency. Even if it weren't the law, your mom would kill me if you got hurt." She

laughed, “And then Eraser would find some way to bring me back from the dead just so he could kill me again. But joking aside, do you understand.”

“Yes. If you are in trouble, another pro will be much more help than I would be and I won’t have to worry about getting hurt or in trouble.” He pouted, “Doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

Joke laughed again and ruffled his hair, “Don’t worry, kiddo, you’ll have your license soon enough.”

Izuku looked up at her, “So what other rules are there?”

Joke’s eyes lit up with mischief, “Keep up!” With that she ran up the nearest fire escape and onto the rooftops while Izuku scrambled to catch up.

“No fair!”

Ms. Joke was taking care of her third mugging of the night when it happened. Izuku was staying up on the rooftops like he’d been told, muttering a live analysis of the fight into his earpiece when he sensed someone coming up behind him. It was only years of dodging Kacchan and months of combat training with Eraserhead that allowed him to move out of the way as a spiked fist came crashing down.

“Some hero brat. You’re pretty creepy with your muttering, you know.” The villain backed Izuku against the wall and swung his fist back.

“Deku!” Ms. Joke cried, but the muggers on the street below came at her and wouldn’t let her leave.

Izuku flinched, knowing that the punch would hurt, maybe even worse than Kacchan’s. When he opened his eyes again, he was staring at the ceiling. He brought a hand up to his face, expecting blood and pain, but to his surprise he was fine. What happened?

“Hey there, handsome, what were you doing up here in the middle of the night?”

“Midnight?” He said in shock, “Did you knock out that guy?”

The heroine nodded, “Sorry it knocked you out too, but unfortunately my quirk just kinda goes everywhere. But that brings us back to what

you're doing on a rooftop in the middle of the night."

"Kiddo! Are you ok? Did he hurt you? I am so sorry!" Ms. Joke climbed up onto the rooftop, having finally knocked out all the villains she'd been fighting. She was nearly frantic with worry when she finally saw Deku and Midnight.

"It's ok, Ms. Joke! Midnight saved me just in time!"

"Oh thank goodness!" She turned to Midnight, "Thank you so much. I told him to stay on the rooftops while I fought the villains so that he'd be safe, I wasn't expecting a villain to attack *him.* I don't know what I would've done if he'd gotten hurt…"

"It's really no problem, I only regret that I had to knock him out too." Midnight looked between the two and her eyes widened, "Joke, you didn't tell me you had a son!"

Izuku turned red as Joke sputtered for a moment, "I, he's not…" Then she got ahold of herself and started laughing, "He's not my son! He's my intern! Why'd you think he was my son?"

"Well," Midnight replied, "You both have green hair. His is quite a bit darker than yours, but if the father's hair was black, like say, Eraserhead's…"

Joke turned red and smacked Midnight in the arm, "Shut up, you tease!"

"Ah, but teasing is so *exciting!* " Midnight purred, "But aren't you going to introduce me to this strapping young hero?"

Joke put her arm around Izuku's shoulders, "Of course! Midnight, this is Deku, my intern for this week. Deku, this is the R-rated hero Midnight."

"Deku?" Midnight was shocked, "Like the analyst?"

Izuku nodded, "It's nice to finally meet you in person, Midnight. Did you catch the blood villain from the last analysis I sent you?"

Midnight shook her head, "You said the villain was probably a woman, so I handed the case off to Vlad King since my quirk wouldn't work as well." She squealed, "You're Deku! Oh, you're so *cute!* "

"I know, he's adorable right?" Joke said.

“Adorable doesn’t even cut it! I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone so small and cute!”

“I’m right here…” Izuku grumbled.

“All right, all right,” Joke held up her hands in surrender, “we’ll stop.” She paused, “But you are adorable.”

Izuku groaned and Midnight laughed, “Well then, I’ll let you get back to your patrol.”

“Actually, I think we’re gonna head home. That was enough excitement for one night, thank you very much.” Joke said, “Thanks again for saving him.”

“You’re welcome.” Midnight waved to them as she left, “See you at UA, Deku!”

The two watched her leave before Deku couldn’t contain himself anymore, “That was Midnight! She’s so cool and her quirk is super useful. She uses her theme well too, even if it was controversial when she first came on the scene…”

Ms. Joke smiled and shook her head as Deku rambled the whole way back.

Chapter End Notes

> Izuku will be doing four internships total before he starts UA. He'll be doing about one every other week until the planned raid on that drug ring, which is in about two months!

What's in a name?

Chapter Summary

> Izuku hangs out with the heroes. His friends learn the origin of his name.

Chapter Notes

> Hey guys! Thanks for all the love you're giving this story! It brightens my day every time I see new comments and kudos. You guys are amazing!
> Guys! Guess what? I got fanart about a hypothetical "epic" hero costume for Deku! I seriously feel like I've made it as a writer.

“Come on, kiddo, we’re gonna be late!” Ms. Joke called behind her as Izuku scrambled to catch up.

“If you want me to keep up, maybe you could take some of my bags?”

Joke just laughed, but grabbed the duffel bag from Izuku’s outstretched hand. To celebrate the end of Izuku’s first pre-school internship, they were going to dinner with Eraserhead, Mr. Brave, and even Sir Nighteye. Izuku was having trouble wrapping his head around the fact that the heroes *wanted* to hang out with him. They seemed to genuinely enjoy his company which was...strange. Even before Kaachan had gotten his quirk, hanging out with him had required a fair bit of posturing, walking on eggshells, and telling Kaachan how amazing he was.

Hanging out with the heroes wasn’t like hanging around Kaachan. The heroes teased one another, but they didn’t mean to hurt each other. They laughed, joked, and talked about each other’s interests. The heroes had never cut off one of his mumble storms by telling him he was annoying or creepy, instead adding interesting insights and asking Izuku to speak up. The worst that had happened was the one time when they were in the middle of a meeting and they told him that they needed to move on, but that they’d like to hear his ideas later.

On the one hand, Izuku was the happiest he’d ever been, but however much he tried to ignore it, fear was bubbling just beneath the surface. *It won’t last. They’ll grow tired of you soon enough. They’ll realize how weak you are and then they’ll hate you just like everybody else.*

Izuku shook his head and followed Joke into the 24 hour diner they were meeting at. Eraser insisted they go there because of everyone's patrol schedules, but Izuku knew that he probably just wanted to avoid being around a lot of people. But it worked out with everyone's schedules, so they were going to dinner at 10:00 at night and then Ms. Joke would take Izuku back home and he'd spend a week with his mom before his next internship with Mr. Brave.

They were apparently the last to arrive, since the others were already sitting in a corner booth. Mr. Brave was telling a joke to Sir Nighteye, who was chuckling softly while Eraser brooded with a cup of coffee and a tired energy that was making the waitresses steer clear. When they saw them, Mr. Brave waved energetically and Sir Nighteye simply nodded. Eraser didn't acknowledge them, but downed the rest of his coffee and looked slightly less broody than before.

"Hey everyone!" Joke said loudly as she pushed Izuku into the booth and slid in after him, "How was your week?"

"The same as every week, Joke," Eraser grumbled, "You were the only one with anything interesting happening."

Joke laughed loudly, "That's fair! I guess I am really spoiled, after all, I had Deku *all week long.* " she bragged.

Mr. Brave rolled his eyes, "Yeah, yeah, we heard you the first dozen times." He turned to Izuku, "She's been bragging non-stop that *she* got the first internship, just because she called dibs." He rolled his eyes, "It's like she's forgotten that *he's going to intern with all of us!* " He called the last part at Joke, who simply stuck her tounge out at him while Izuku giggled.

"So how *was* the internship, problem child?" Eraser asked.

Izuku beamed, "It was amazing! I got to watch Ms. Joke fight and see how she used her quirk to take down the villains. I even got to meet Midnight!"

Eraser gave Joke a *look,* "You took a fourteen year old to meet the R-rated heroine?"

"She...ran into us while on patrol, and besides you know she isn't *that* bad. They do let her teach at UA, don't they?"

Eraser sighed and Izuku continued, "I got to hang out with the support department too. They were a lot of fun and they gave me a real hero

commision earpiece too!"

"You should have seen them when I told them he was Deku," Joke smile proudly, "They couldn't take their jaws off the floor after they saw his skills in person. One guy even asked him for an autograph!"

Izuku turned a bright red while the others laughed and Eraser patted his shoulder consolingly, "That's tough, kid. You're already famous enough to sign autographs and you're not even in high school yet."

"I'm not famous," Izuku grumbled, "Only heroes really know I exist."

Mr. Brave shrugged, "Maybe not, but among heroes, you've got quite the reputation. We're all waiting with bated breath the day that Deku becomes an official hero."

Their food had arrived by that point, since the others had ordered for Joke and Izuku before they arrived, and they all started to eat.

Nighteye looked at Izuku, "That reminds me, why did you choose the name Deku as your hero name?"

Izuku looked surprised, "Deku's going to be my hero name?"

The others just looked at him and Eraser sighed, "Yes, problem child. It's kinda too late to change it now, since you've made all your connections with the name Deku and everyone knows who you are. That's how I got stuck with Eraserhead. I honestly didn't really care what I was called, so when we had to choose at the beginning of internships our first year, I just went with the first thing out of Present Mic's mouth. Then I got a reputation during my internship and the name stuck. Sorry if you wanted something else kid, but that's the way the world works."

Izuku nodded, "I guess that makes sense, I just hadn't thought of it like that."

"You definitely chose an interesting name," Nighteye said, "It means *useless* , doesn't it?"

"I thought it was like dekiru," Joke said, "You know? *I can do it* ! Because if anyone can do it, Deku can." Izuku blushed.

"I thought it was supposed to be ironic," Brave spoke up, "like *it's useless to resist* or something like that."

Izuku laughed, “Not really, I’d never thought of it like that!”

“So…” Eraserhead prompted, “Why did you choose the name Deku?”

“It’s what my bullies called me because I was quirkless.”

Izuku was busy taking a drink, and so was oblivious to the looks of shocked horror on his friends' faces.

Brave was the first to speak up, “Deku is an insult?”

Izuku nodded, “My best friend gave me the nickname when we were four because it’s an alternate reading of Izuku and I was useless now because I didn’t have a quirk. Pretty much everybody calls me that now, even the teachers.”

“We’ve been calling you by an insult all this time.” Eraser said angrily, “Why didn’t you say anything? Why did you tell us to call you that?”

Izuku played with his food for a minute before responding, “The day you asked if I had a codename was...a really bad day. I’m usually ok at ignoring all the voices that say I’m not good enough but…” he shrugged, “At the time, I thought you guys deserved to know exactly who you were working with, that I was just a worthless deku who would never be of any use to anyone.”

The heroes stared at him for a moment. It had never crossed their minds that Deku was using the name literally. They had never thought that maybe Deku called himself that because that’s what he thought. Eraser wanted to find everyone who had ever hurt him and make them undergo the same psychological torture that Deku had been subjected to for years.

“We can change it!” Joke said. The others nodded, “It would take a lot of work and normally I’d say it’s more trouble than it’s worth, but if it’s an insult…”

“Yeah,” Mr. Brave added, “You shouldn’t have to go by such a hurtful nickname for the rest of your career.”

Izuku shook his head, “Thanks guys, but really, it’s ok.” He sipped his drink thoughtfully, “I don’t think I mind it as much anymore. At first, it was really hurtful, but people have been calling me Deku since I was four and I’ve gotten used to it.”

“You shouldn’t have to be used to it,” Eraser said angrily, “We’ve been

insulting you for months."

Izuku looked at him in confusion, "But it's not an insult when you guys say it."

They stared at him for a moment and he sighed, "You guys don't say Deku like it's an insult. I can't explain it, but it's something in your tone of voice when you talk to me. To you guys, it's just a name. I know that you guys respect me, so I don't feel useless when you say it, I feel..." he hesitated, "appriciated. I feel like you guys have taken something I hated for years and turned it on its head so that it means something completely different than it was meant to be. It makes me feel powerful to know that I've taken even my old insults and made them my own. Does that make any sense?"

There was a long moment of silence before Izuku yelped as Joke enveloped him in a hug. Brave and Nighteye didn't hesitate, standing up and moving around the table to hug him as well.

"Get in here Eraser!" Joke glared at him and Izuku started laughing and crying at the same time.

Eraser just returned a glare of his own, "No."

"Just get in here and join the hug!" Nighteye said.

Eraser sighed heavily and rolled his eyes in defeat, but wrapped his arms around Izuku and the others. They stayed there for a few minutes until Izuku managed to stop crying. Could anyone blame him, though? Izuku beamed and wrapped his arms tighter around the heroes he was proud to call his friends.

The Baby has Acquired a Knife Somehow!

Chapter Summary

Izuku's internship with Mr. Brave aka weapons training!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku groaned as Mr. Brave used his hair like a whip to flip him onto his back. Again.

“Ugh. This just isn’t working!” Izuku stared up at the ceiling piteously, “I’m pretty good at hand to hand combat if I can get in close, but your quirk allows you to keep me at a distance. The way you can use your hair as a weapon even when it’s detached means I can never get close to your actual body. The only way I could plausibly defeat you would be to completely destroy all your hair and then attack you, but I’d be exhausted long before that’d be a possibility.” He rolled over and propped himself up on his elbows, “What do you think I should do Brave?”

Mr. Brave ran his hand through his hair, “Hmm, well, I haven’t ever run into that problem because my quirk is good for both ranged and close combat, but...maybe it’s time you start learning weapons?”

Izuku’s eyes widened, “Really?”

Brave shrugged, “I don’t see any reason why not. You were gonna have to learn how to use weapons and support items eventually anyway because you don’t have a quirk, so we may as well start now. Let’s talk to the support department, see what they’ve got lying around for you to try.”

Izuku failed miserably as he tried not to be overwhelmed as he stared at the buffet of weapons on the table. There were quarterstaffs, tonfas, knives, swords, guns, grappling hooks, grenades, and some things that Izuku couldn’t tell what they were for the life of him.

“Now you’ll probably want something for ranged combat and something for close combat,” Mr. Brave said.

Izuku nodded, “Like how Eraser has his capture weapon to keep

people with mutant quirks at a distance, but also has a knife if he needs it."

"I mean, I think he mostly uses his knife to cut his capture weapon if it gets caught," Mr. Brave said thoughtfully, "But you've got the right idea. The goal is just to be safe and to make sure you have options for every situation. It'd probably also be good for you to learn how to use things like flash grenades and smoke bombs as sell so that you can run away from fights you're not ready for, especially while you're on your internships." He looked at Izuku, "So Deku, are you ready to try some of these babies out?"

"No." Izuku shook his head and sighed, "But I want to do it anyway."

Brave laughed, "That's the spirit! What do you want to try first?"

Izuku awkwardly picked up the quarterstaff and gave it a few experimental twirls.

"Nice pick," Brave yanked a few strands of hair from the back of his head and grew, twisted and hardened them until he was holding a black quarterstaff about the same size as the one Izuku had chosen.

Izuku stared wide eyed at the process, "Do you know how to use it?"

Brave nodded, "At least a little. Back when I was in school, I realized that I could use my hair to make basically any melee weapon I wanted, within reason, so I learned the basics of as many as I could. I prefer swords, myself, but," He shrugged, "What can you do?" Then he charged.

Izuku tried to block Mr. Brave's attack, but ended up awkwardly fumbling his staff, tripping over it as he tried to retreat, then hitting himself on the head as he fell. Brave dropped his staff to hold his gut laughing as Izuku glared at him, rubbing his sore head, "Shut up. It's not as easy as it looks! I think I'm too short for a quarterstaff, anyway."

Brave just held up a finger as he took a few minutes to compose himself. After a minute or so he sighed, "Ok, I'm done. But really, you can't expect to be amazing at a weapon the first time you hold it. Weapons mastery takes *time* , just like other skills, and it's always going to be painful at the beginning. That being said, you want to enjoy the feeling of the weapon you choose because otherwise you won't want to practice it and you'll never learn."

Izuku sighed, “I think I want to try something else if that’s ok…”

Brave nodded and helped him up from the floor. They ended up spending the next few hours with Izuku trying all the weapons available with varying levels of success and Brave using his hair to make weapons of his own to fight back. By the time they were almost finished with the close combat weapon options, Izuku was frustrated, tired, and sore.

“Alright, Deku, this is the last one.” Brave said, tired himself, “Knives.”

Izuku groaned tiredly but took the knife from the table. Brave made his own and taught Izuku how to hold it before stepping back.

“You ready?” He waited for Izuku to nod before running at him. Izuku pivoted out of the way and slashed, using his dull blade to land a hit on Brave’s arm right where he knew there was a ligament that would make it difficult for his opponent to use that arm if this was a real fight. He smiled at Brave, who used his distraction to knock him on his back again.

“That felt different,” Brave observed, holding out a hand to help Izuku up, “You liked that one, didn’t you?”

Izuku nodded, “I think knives will mesh well with the hand to hand I’ve learned from Eraser and will help me target the weak points I see in my analysis. I could have easily cut your hair with a strong enough knife or given you shallow cuts on your fingers to make it more difficult for you to pull out your hair. I’ll have to be careful and study some anatomy so I know what cuts I can make without seriously injuring my opponent but,” he smiled brightly, “I think I’m up to the challenge.”

“That’s my boy!” Brave clapped Izuku heavily on the back, almost knocking him over, “Ok, let’s go an a short patrol. We can work on ranged weapons tomorrow, how does that sound?”

Izuku nodded and they both went to go change for patrol.

The next day, Izuku and Mr. Brave were back in the training gym at his agency trying to choose a ranged weapon in case Izuku couldn’t get close to his target.

“Midnight uses a whip, right?” Brave asked as Izuku picked one up.

Izuku nodded, “I think she chose it because it fits with her theme, but it would be useful to be able to grab opponents and bring them closer, although I think I’d prefer something like Eraser’s capture weapon if that were my goal.” He tried to crack the whip, but just gave himself a welt on the cheek, “Maybe I’ll come back to this one if I don’t find another weapon I like better.” He said sheepishly.

He ended up liking the bow and arrow decently well, but quickly realized that his hand to hand would suffer if he had to carry such a large weapon on his back. “I think I’ll leave that weapon to Native,” he said as he gingerly placed it back on the table, “What else have we got?”

Brave looked over his shoulder, “It looks like we’ve got some blow darts and shurikens as well as some guns. What do you want to try?”

Izuku thought for a moment, “Well, Snipe uses guns and he varies the kind of bullet he uses based on how much damage he wants to do. He mostly uses rubber bullets and bean bag rounds, but he’s also been known to use live ammo and tranq darts.”

“Ok! We don’t have a shooting range in this building, but the police station does and it’s just a few blocks away. Is that alright?”

It didn’t take them long to arrive, especially since Mr. Brave was in his civilian garb and not many people would have recognized him anyway, so they didn’t have to worry about being stopped for autographs like a daylight hero would. Detective Tsukauchi was standing by the front desk when they arrived and he waved when he saw them.

“Hello Mr. Brave, Deku. How’s the internship going?”

Izuku smiled, “It’s going really well, detective. Mr. Brave thinks it’s time I start learning weapons so I can make up for...everything.”

“Guns seem like a nice option if Deku can’t get close to his opponent for any reason,” Brave said, “We were wondering if we could use the shooting range here, see if he likes them.”

Tsukauchi nodded, “That’ll be fine, you’ll just need to sign some waivers and I’ll take you right back.”

After they read through the required paperwork, Tsukauchi handed them both earmuffs and led them into the basement where a few officers were already practicing their marksmanship. Tsukauchi

grabbed some paper targets from a bin by the door and sent one out about three meters to start, then handed Izuku a pistol.

“Ok, so the first rule of gun safety is to always treat a gun as if it’s loaded, even when you know it’s not. Basically, don’t point the gun at someone unless you’re actually ready to shoot them.” Izuku nodded and Tsukauchi taught him how to load it and where to put his hands while Brave looked on proudly.

“Ok, now this little piece on the top is what’s called a sight. You aim by lining it up with your target, which will become second nature the more you practice. Now Deku, just try to hit the bullseye.”

Izuku nodded and took a deep breath, trying to remember everything Tsukauchi had told him as he aimed, then pulled the trigger. He looked at the detective who nodded and gestured for him to fire again. Once he’d emptied his cartridge, Tsukauchi called back the target and Izuku smiled.

None of the bullets had hit the bullseye, but none of them had completely missed the target either. Brave whistled and Tsukauchi smiled, “That’s a pretty nice grouping for your first time holding a gun. Would you like to try again?”

Izuku nodded enthusiastically and reloaded the gun as Tsukauchi changed the target. By the time they left two hours later, Izuku had gotten lucky and hit the bullseye twice and set up appointments to come practice twice a week. He massaged the soreness out of his hand as Brave gave the earmuffs back.

“Good work, Deku.” Tsukauchi said, “You’ll need to have an official firearm certification before you’re allowed to carry a gun in the field, but as long as you keep practicing, you should be able to get certified right before school starts in a few months. Either way, you should include the gun in your costume design and the support company will just add it when you’re ready.”

Izuku nodded and followed Mr. Brave out the door, “Thanks detective!”

Brave chucked as they left, “Everybody’s gonna be so jealous I got to teach you weapons.”

Group Chat

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

@87657 You gave him a *gun?!*

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Well…

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Of all the irresponsible things you could have done this week, *you gave him a gun?*

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Calm down, Eraser, it's not like I let him keep it! I took him down to the police station shooting range and Tsukauchi was there the whole time. He's gonna help the kid get a certification so he doesn't shoot his eye out. He won't be able to carry it in the field for months, so stop being such a dad.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

I'm just concerned and I am not acting like a dad.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Actually, you kinda are.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

I'm on Eraserhead's side. I support the idea of Deku having weapons, but are you *sure* it had to be a gun, Brave?

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Hey, we tried a bunch of different ones and Deku liked the gun best. He took to it like a duck to water too. It's not that different from the knives he chose for close combat.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

You gave him knives?!?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

This just in, Eraserhead strives to babyproof the hero industry to protect one (1) smol green bean!

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Shut up, Joke!

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Not until you stop acting like a dad!

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

As long as he learns how to use the weapons safely, I suppose it'll be alright. There are a lot of quirks that are more dangerous than guns.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Fine! You win! Deku's got a gun and I'm going back to bed.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Just wait, the kiddo will show up to class the first day with a gun strapped to his hip and Eraser'll have to choose between being a proud papa and a sour grumpus.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

You do realize I'm still here, right?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Obviously! It's no fun to tease you when you're not here.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

You're insufferable.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

But you love me!

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

I really don't.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

You two, stop flirting and go to bed!

87657 has left the chat.

72598 has left the chat

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

You heard the guy! Sleep well, Eraser! Remember, coffee doesn’t count as sleep!

58726 has left the chat

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

We weren’t…whatever, good night.

12579 has left the chat.

Chapter End Notes

> If you can't tell, I am obsessed with giving Izuku knives. I wasn't originally planning on giving him a gun, but then everyone in the comments really wanted to see Izuku with a gun, so... it was just too good to resist!

Kacchan

Chapter Summary

> Kacchan runs into Deku on his way home from the UA entrance exam.

Chapter Notes

> I'm sorry.

Katsuki Bakugo massaged out his wrists as he walked home from the UA entrance exam. He'd been pleasantly surprised that Deku hadn't shown up, but that didn't explain the changes he'd been seeing in the nerd the past few months. At first it was small, just Deku smiling more and always looking at his phone, as if the nerd had anyone to text. Annoying, but not a big deal at the end of the day. But then, about two or three months ago, Katsuki had stopped seeing the nerd outside of class at all. It wasn't like they hung out socially or anything, but Katsuki could usually find Deku during lunch or after school and give him a beat down to make sure he still knew his place and wasn't still trying to be a hero.

But lately, it was as if Deku had been disappearing into thin air whenever he didn't have to be in class. Once, Katsuki and his lackeys had followed him into an alleyway that he was *certain* didn't have any other exit, but the nerd was nowhere to be seen. The only sound or movement at all was some cat or something clamoring over the rooftops. And then school let out a month ago and he hadn't seen Deku since. It was really starting to piss him off.

So when he saw a telltale sign of green hair turning the corner in front of him, Katsuki didn't hesitate to follow. Deku was listening to something on his phone and muttering to himself like the creep he was, so he didn't notice Katsuki gradually getting closer until he was grabbed by the collar and roughly pulled into an alley.

"Deku!" He growled and shoved the nerd against the wall.

"K-kacchan!" Deku squeaked out, "I-it's been a w-while."

Katsuki scoffed, "You've been avoiding me, nerd. You think you're better than me?"

He smiled slightly as Deku's eyes widened in fear, "N-no, Kacchan, that's not it at all! I've just b-been really b-busy and…"

"Busy? As if a nobody like you has places to be." He slammed Deku against the wall again, wincing a little when he heard the nerd's head hit the brick, "Admit it! You think you're too good to be around me!"

"K-kacchan…" Deku slurred, but Katsuki wasn't listening. He threw a right hook at Deku's face, eyes widening as the nerd *grabbed his arm* and pivoted as if he was trying to throw Katsuki over his shoulder. Something went wrong at the last minute though, because Deku swayed a bit, then stumbled, allowing Katsuki to yank his arm free.

Katsuki saw red. *That damn nerd!* Was he really trying to fight back? After all the time Katsuki had spent teaching him his place? Who did he think he was?

He grabbed Deku's shoulder with his left hand and set off a small explosion, causing him to cry out, but Katsuki wasn't done. He kept his hand on Deku's shoulder to keep him in place as he kneed him in the gut, then used his right to hit Deku in the jaw, which knocked him to the ground.

"P-please, K-kacchan, stop! I-it hurts! W-we're friends, please, stop!"

Katsuki snorted, "Friends? With a useless loser like you?" He kicked him in the gut then let lose a few quirked punches that Deku tried to block with his arms, "Who would be friends with *you?"*

As soon as he deemed that Deku had learned his lesson, Katsuki stood up straight and looked down at the cowering nerd. Pathetic.

"I'm glad you didn't show your worthless face at the entrance exam, Deku." He said, "It seems you've finally learned your lesson about trying to be a hero." He gave one last kick, then turned to leave the alley, "Don't make me teach you again."

Izuku dragged himself to the training gym he was meeting his friends at that afternoon, trying to ignore the nausea and the way his vision seemed to blur at the edges. They had all agreed to get together to see how he was coming along with his training, especially now that he was starting to add weapons. He wanted nothing more than to go home and sleep for a million years, but his discussion with Katsuki had already made him late. He couldn't disappoint his friends by not showing up at all.

“Hey, Deku!” Joke cried out cheerfully when she heard the door open, “What took you so long?”

Deku tried to smile despite the pain in his cheek, but that soon turned into a frown when he saw the horrified looks on his friends’ faces. Izuku knew he should know why they were so horrified, but his brain was too foggy to come up with anything.

“...eku. Deku, can you hear me?” Eraserhead was kneeling in front of him and Izuku hissed as he touched the burn on his shoulder. Eraser yanked his hand away, but grabbed his other shoulder as Izuku started to sway. He was grateful for the support, since he felt like he was going to fall over any second.

“Hi, Eraser…” He tried to say, but it ended up coming out slurred and Izuku frowned in confusion. Why weren’t words working the way they were supposed to? He didn’t normally stutter around his friends.

“Joke, hold him, make sure he stays awake, I’m calling Recovery Girl.”

Izuku brightened, “Recovery Girl is such a great hero,” he slurred, “But I’m not that injured. I’ve had worse…”

Joke looked afraid, “Kiddo...just, ramble for me. What do you like about Recovery Girl’s quirk?”

Izuku nodded, but stopped when it felt like his head was about to split in two. He wanted to tell Joke about how the healing energy coming from the person’s own stamina allowed the heroine to heal for hours with hardly any breaks, but for some reason his tongue felt really heavy. He was really tired.

“...iddo, you’ve ...tta...ay aw..ke….eku!”

For all that Shouta tried to deny it when the others implied he saw Deku as a son, he didn’t think he’d ever been more terrified than when the kid had stumbled in with a massive bruise on his cheek and dirty tear tracks running down his face. The way he’d hissed in pain when Shouta tried to steady him broke his heart and drew his attention to his singed t-shirt and the shiny burns running up and down his arms.

It didn’t take him long to realize that Deku had a pretty bad concussion and needed medical treatment immediately. How had he even managed to walk here? The kid had to have a freakish pain

tolerance, which didn't paint a pretty picture.

He called Ms. Joke over to steady Deku and keep him awake while he called Recovery Girl. He was trying to explain the situation when he heard Joke's panicked voice and he turned around just in time to watch Deku pass out in Joke's arms.

"That's it, we're taking him to UA, *now!* "

Sir Nighteye nodded, "You steady him and make sure we won't be worsening any injuries, I'll grab my car."

"Hang in there, Deku. Please!" Shouta whispered, "Please. We're gonna get you help."

Izuku woke up blinking under harsh fluorescent lights. When he realized he didn't know where he was, he bolted upright, only to fall back on the bed when he was hit by a wave of nausea.

"Don't try to sit up too fast, dearie." An old woman's voice said, "You had a bad concussion. I managed to heal most of it, but you still shouldn't move too quickly."

Izuku obeyed the voice and moved more slowly. He felt the bed he was on raising up to help him and figured the owner of the voice must be controlling it.

He turned to look at her, "Recovery Girl!?" She chuckled and nodded, gesturing for Izuku to look around the rest of the room, "Eraser? Joke? Brave? Nighteye? What are you all doing here?" He paused for a moment, "What am *I* doing here? And where is *here* anyway?"

"You're at UA," Eraser said, "We brought you here because you had a concussion, multiple burns, as well as bruising on your face and stomach. You're honestly lucky you didn't have any internal bleeding."

Izuku nodded along as he remembered the beating Kacchan had given him. That sounded about right. He looked at his friends' faces and was hit by a wave of guilt as he realized he'd made them all worry. He shrank in on himself, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to bother you, and it was probably really inconvenient and…" he looked up to find his four closest friends staring at him with so much concern he wanted to throw up and he started to hyperventilate.

“Slow down, kid.” Mr. Brave was suddenly kneeling at his side, “Breathe with me. In, out. Ok?”

After Izuku had managed to calm his breathing, he kept his eyes glued to the covers in embarrassment. He should have just gone home and hidden his injuries before meeting his friends so they wouldn’t have to worry about them. Why didn’t he do that? How could he have forgotten to do something so basic?

“I would’ve been fine, guys. Maybe these injuries seem a *little* bad, but I’ve always managed pretty well in the past. You didn’t need to take me to a doctor.”

Recovery Girl rapped him lightly on the head with her cane, “Don’t go saying things like that, dearie. Your injuries were severe and in other circumstances could have been life threatening. Your friends did the right thing by bringing you here.”

“Deku,” Eraser spoke softly, as if expecting Izuku to run away if he spoke too loud, “Who did this to you?”

Izuku stared down at his hands, “It’s not his fault.”

“What do you mean, kiddo?” It was strange hearing Ms. Joke so quiet when normally her very presence was loud enough to take over a room. Izuku took a deep breath and hoped his friends wouldn’t judge him.

“It was my fault. I, um, I shouldn’t have gotten in his way. He was right, I was avoiding him, which I guess means he thought that I was thinking I was better than him, which I’m not, I know that. I’ll never be better than him, but I guess that’s how I was acting because that’s what he thought and so it’s my fault because he had to teach me a lesson and he’s probably going to be super mad when he finds out that I still want to be a hero and then, oh no! And then he’s gonna do it again and it’ll still be all my fault.”

Shouta felt his heart break. This kid. He’d just gotten beaten to a pulp, but instead of blaming the guilty party he was trying to justify it, searching for any tiny thing he’d done to deserve it. And the worst part was that people don’t just start to do that overnight. The self blame that Deku was exhibiting had to be the result of years of abuse, both emotional and physical. Who would do that to a kid?

“Deku, who did this?”

He watched as Deku continued playing with his hands rather than looking up. He didn't want to push the kid, but…

"I, um, it was my f-friend. K-kaccan." Deku said softly, then hurried on, "But like I said, it wasn't his fault! It was mine for thinking I was better than him."

Nighteye raised one eyebrow, "First of all, did you actually think that?"

Deku's eyes widened and he flailed his arms, "No! I would never! But he thinks I did, so I must have done *something* to make him think that, so it's my own fault. I shouldn't have gotten in his way, I should have just…"

Nighteye raised a hand to cut him off, "If you didn't even do what he was accusing you of, how could it have been your fault? And even if you had 'thought you were better than him' as you put it, it would still have been his fault for lashing out. Does that make any sense?"

Deku thought for a moment, "Kinda. But he's my friend. He wouldn't hurt me if he didn't have a good reason…"

"Sometimes, people don't have to have good reasons to hurt other people." Brave said hesitantly, "And sometimes, they hurt others because it's what makes sense to them, but that doesn't make it right."

"It also doesn't make it your fault, Deku," Joke said, "If this boy decided to hurt you, it's because he wanted to hurt you, not because of anything you did."

"B-but that doesn't make any sense!" Deku sniffled as he started crying again, "If he hurt me, it must be because I did something bad! We've been best friends since we were kids!"

"Deku," Eraser looked him in the eye, "friends don't hurt each other."

The room was silent for a long time as Deku digested that information. When he spoke again, his voice was fragile, "You mean, Kacchan's not really my friend?"

" *We're* your friends, Deku." Joke said, "We care about you and would never try to hurt you or 'teach you your place'. Friends help each other, like when you help us with your analysis, or when we help you with your training. Friends tease each other and lift each other up, they don't put each other down or try to crush each other's dreams."

“Oh.” Deku said quietly.

“I know it probably hurts to hear this,” Nighteye said, “But Kacchan probably hasn’t been your friend in a long time.”

Deku nodded absently.

“But that’s ok!” Brave said cheerfully, “You’ve got us now!”

Deku gave a weak smile, but Shouta could tell he still didn’t really believe them. Not that he could blame the kid. One positive conversation wasn’t enough to override a lifetime of conditioning. He didn’t know how long it would take before Deku realized what an extraordinary kid he was, but Shouta did know one thing.

If he ever met this ‘Kacchan’, that kid was getting a piece of his mind.

Mutations

Chapter Summary

The beginning of Izuku's internship with Sir Nighteye.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! This chapter is a little longer than I normally make them, but it just didn't want to be split into two chapters, so you all got lucky today!

“Hey! I’m looking for Deku, is he here?”

Inko looked at the young man suspiciously, “Are you one of his friends?”

The young man smiled and Inko was reminded of All Might, “Yep!”

“Hmm,” She hesitated, “What’s your hero name?”

He put both hands on his hips and struck his chest out, “Le Million! Why?”

Inko gave a tense smile, “Most of Izuku’s friends are pro heroes. Someone his own age...let’s just say kids have pretended to be his friends as pranks before.”

Le Million frowned, “That sucks.”

Inko nodded in agreement as Izuku came up behind her carrying his duffel bag, “Thanks Mom.” He looked at the newcomer, “You must be Mirio Toogata! Nighteye’s intern?”

The boy nodded, “That’s right! And you’re Deku, right? I’ve heard a lot about you.”

“Don’t believe everything you hear,” Izuku said blushing, “Nighteye and the others tend to exaggerate.”

Toogata laughed, “Sir told me you were too modest for your own good! Here, let me take that for you.” He grabbed the duffle out of Izuku’s hand.

“Have fun this week!” Inko waved as the boys left, “Be safe!”

“We will Mom!” Izuku called back. “Bye!”

“She worries a lot, doesn’t she?” Togata asked.

Izuku nodded, “Her heart’s in the right place though. I know she doesn’t really want me to be a hero, she’s pretty bad at hiding it actually, but she’s willing to support me even though it makes her worry.” He shrugged. “That’s more than most people can say, so I count myself pretty lucky.” He smiled. “So what’s it like being Nighteye’s intern?”

Toogata beamed, “Super fun! But also really difficult. I didn’t have a great handle on my quirk when I was recruited, but he’s put me through the wringer the last few months and now I’m one of the best students at UA.” He rubbed the back of his neck. “But actually, recently my quirk kind of...mutated, and I’m basically having to master it all over again. I was hoping you could help me with it this week, if that’s ok?”

Izuku nodded, “I’d love to. Analyzing quirks is really fun for me and I love coming up with ideas to help people improve. Your quirk is some kind of permeation, right? I remember you made a big splash at the sports festival.”

Toogata went slightly pink, “Uhh, yeah. I really should have listened to sensei when he suggested wearing a uniform infused with my DNA, but I thought that’d count as a costume or support item and give me an unfair advantage so…”

Izuku nodded, “I understand where you’re coming from, but that is a pretty big disadvantage.”

Toogata laughed again, “Yeah, you get used to it. I hardly even get embarrassed anymore, except when I’m naked on national television, apparently.”

Izuku pulled out a small notebook as they got on the train, “So, you said your quirk had mutated. What’s it like now?”

“Well,” Toogata paused thoughtfully, like he was trying to be careful about what he said, “It’s gotten kind of a...super strength aspect to it now? And some speed. But if I use it for more than a few punches at a time, I get hairline fractures in my bones.”

Izuku hummed thoughtfully, “That’s a pretty big mutation. It almost sounds like your quirk is too powerful for your body.”

Toogata chuckled awkwardly, “Yeah, we thought it might be something like that…”

Izuku was already taking notes and jotting down different ideas, “I think I’m gonna need to see your quirk in action before I can come up with anything concrete, but it’s probably better if we wait until we’re at Nighteye’s agency before we do that. Public quirk usage and all that.”

Toogata nodded, “So you’re gonna be starting UA this year, right?”

“Yep!” Izuku practically bounced with excitement, “It’s seriously a dream come true! I’ve wanted to be a hero ever since I was a toddler. I just can’t believe it’s finally happening.”

“Do you know what class you’re going to be in?”

Izuku nodded, “1A. Normally, I’m not sure they’d put in a class where I was already friends with the teacher, but I think they knew Eraser would be ok with teaching...someone like me.”

Toogata frowned in confusion, “Someone like you? You mean someone who’s already worked in the field?”

Izuku sighed, “I mean someone quirkless.”

Toogata’s jaw dropped, “You’re *quirkless?”*

Izuku figited uncomfortably. Why’d he say that? Why’d he have to go and ruin it? And Toogata had been so nice too.

“Sorry dude,” Toogata said, shaking his head, “I’m not sure I’m worthy to be around someone was impressive as you. I for sure thought you had some kind of analysis quirk from what Sir told me about you. Has there ever been a quirkless hero before?”

Izuku stared at him, “You mean, you don’t think less of me because I don’t have a quirk? You think it’s...cool?”

Toogata nodded, “I guess you probably don’t hear that a lot, do you?”

Izuku shook his head slowly.

“Well you should.” Toogata said, clapping him on the back. “I was made fun of for my quirk too. Pretty much everyone told me it was too weak or had too many drawbacks. That there was no way I could be a hero. I almost believed them for a while. But then Sir took me

under his wing and made me into who I am today. So, no, I'm not gonna judge you or tell you that you can't be a hero, because I can see you've got what it takes in here." He poked Izuku in the chest, then his eyes widened. "Oh, no, you're crying. What happened? What did I do? Did I say something wrong?"

Izuku shook his head and wiped his eyes, "They're happy tears, I promise. Sorry," he laughed, "I've always been kinda a cry baby."

"No problem," Toogata said, "I think you're pretty cool."

It wasn't long until they reached their stop and they walked the rest of the way to Sir Nigheye's agency, chatting about heroes who had recently debuted. They walked in the door and were greeted by a woman with blue skin.

"Aww! You must Deku!"

Izuku nodded, "You're Bubble Girl! It's nice to meet you!"

Bubble Girl nodded, "Likewise. Sir asked me to show you where you'll be staying this week, then you'll be meeting him in his office. I think he has some cases he wants you to take a look at."

"Aww…" Toogata sighed, "I wanted Deku to help me with my quirk!"

"I'm sure there'll be time for that later, Le Million, but Sir takes first priority."

"It's ok!" Toogata smiled, "I'll just be practicing in the gym." He turned to Izuku. "Come find me when Sir's done with you."

Izuku nodded as Toogata left and Bubble Girl led him to Nighteye's office. When he walked in, Nighteye was busy scribbling away at his desk, so Izuku took a moment to look around the room. He knew Nighteye used to be All Might's sidekick but, wow, he was almost a bigger fanboy than Izuku used to be. He shifted uncomfortably under the number one hero's gaze. Even through the posters, it felt like All Might was judging him.

Izuku shook his head and turned his attention to the bookshelves instead. He had people who believed in him now. He was Deku, a highly respected analyst who had worked with more pros than many people would ever meet. All Might was just one more in the list of people who told him he couldn't, no different than Kacchan or his teachers. He took a deep breath.

“Sorry about that, Deku, I had to finish the paperwork from the case we closed yesterday.”

“The kidnapping case?”

Nighteye nodded, “The leader had a paralyzation quirk, just like you thought.”

“Bubble Girl said you had some other cases for me to look at…”

“Yes, but I don’t just want you to analyze while you’re here,” Nighteye went over the cabinet and grabbed a handful of files, “I want you to observe how to handle a case from beginning to end. For example, we received a report yesterday of a museum robbery,” He opened the paper-thin file in front of Izuku, “Here is the evidence we retrieved from the scene and we’ll be collaborating with the police. What would you do first?”

Izuku looked through the file, mostly a list of what was stolen, the damage done to the doors and display cases, and the data from the security cameras.

“The cameras were turned off?”

“Yes,” Nighteye said, “But none of the cameras were broken.”

Izuku thought for a moment, “We’re probably looking for someone with a jamming quirk or some sort of technology manipulation, so I’d ask the police to run a list of those, but there’s also the possibility of someone simply hacking into the system, so they should run a list of known hackers as well. If it *is* a hacker, we should look at the system history because they might have left a trail. With a high profile robbery like this, there’s a strong probability that the culprit has committed smaller crimes in the past, so cross reference the quirk and hacker lists with small robberies where the cameras were turned off within the past five years.”

He looked to Nighteye, who looked a little less stern than usual, “Good work. There are a few other possibilities that you could investigate, however…”

For the next few hours, Nighteye took Izuku through some of their current cases and educated him on the proper procedures for an investigation and how to work with the police to make sure all the evidence was catalogued and the villains were taken into custody. By the end, Izuku’s brain hurt a little, but his cheeks also hurt from

smiling too wide, so he figured it was alright.

“Also, Deku, I think it would be a good idea for you to get a private investigator’s license. It will be redundant once you receive your full hero’s licence, but I believe you would find it useful in the meantime.”

Izuku nodded, “I’ll bring it up with Nedzu once school gets started, since I think he wants to have private lessons with me. I’m sure he’s got some resources I can use to get it quickly.”

Nighteye nodded, “That’s good. Just don’t forget that the purpose of those lessons will be to learn, not to take over the world.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” Izuku laughed. “If we’re finished, I promised Toogata I’d help him with his quirk.”

Nighteye waved him away and grabbed a few more files to work on, “I don’t often patrol like the other heroes you’ve interned with thus far, so I will simply see you tomorrow.”

Izuku smiled and left, closing the door behind him as he headed down toward where he thought the gym was. It took him a few minutes to find, since he took a wrong turn once and had to get directions from Centipeder, but soon enough he was peeking through the door to see if Toogata was still there.

“...You’ll get it, young Toogata, I know you will.”

Izuku hurriedly ducked back outside and held himself flat against the wall. What was All Might doing here? Didn’t he have a falling out with Sir Nighteye years ago? And why was he in his skeletal form in front of Toogata? Did he already run out of time today?

Izuku could still hear the conversation filtering through the walls.

“I know, it’s just so hard getting used to this much power. It’s so different than my permeation!” Toogata sighed, “But I’ve asked Deku to help me out, so hopefully he’ll help me work out some of the kinks.”

“Deku?” All Might sounded confused, “Who’s that?”

Izuku could practically hear Toogata’s smile, “He’s this super awesome quirk analyst that’s been helping out in the underground for almost a year now. He doesn’t interact with daylight heroes much, so I’m not surprised you haven’t heard of him, but Sir talks about him all the

time."

"Ahh," All Might said, "I suppose that makes sense. When are you supposed to meet him?"

"Actually, I'm supposed to be meeting him right now. Well, as soon as Sir's done with him, but they should have finished by now. I told him to meet me here." He paused, "Maybe I should go look for him, make sure he didn't get lost."

"Very well, young Toogata." All Might said, "I need to get to an appointment with Recover Girl, so I'll see you tomorrow."

Izuku quickly ran around a corner so he wouldn't be seen and hopefully All Might would walk in the other direction. He almost sighed in relief when Toogata rounded the corner by himself. He really wasn't ready to face All Might today.

"Hey, Deku!" Toogata said cheerfully, "I was just looking for you. You didn't get lost, did you?"

"Only a little," Izuku said shakily, "Centipeder helped me out. So, are you ready for me to see your quirk?"

"Yeah!" Toogata yelled and led Izuku into the thankfully empty gym. They made their way to the corner where a series of punching bags were set up.

"So, this is kind of what my quirk started as," Toogata passed a hand through one of the punching bags, "I can turn my entire body intangible, but if I do that all at once, I'll just fall straight into the floor, which will spit me back out once I turn tangible again. While I'm intangible, I can't see, hear, or breathe because light, sound, and air just pass right through me."

Izuku nodded and pulled out a notebook, "Ok, so you said you've pretty much mastered this part of your quirk, right? You know how to work around the drawbacks?" Toogata nodded. "Ok, what about the mutation you mentioned?"

Toogata nodded and concentrated. His veins started glowing red with power and he passed his hand through the punching bag again, but this time without turning intangible. Izuku shielded his eyes from the flying sand and braced himself to stay on his feet despite the massive wind.

“So...yeah,” Toogata said, “That’s the super strength aspect. I can do a few punches like that but any more than two or three and my bones start breaking. It’s just hairline fractures so far, but I don’t want to get into a fight where my choices are to break my body or fail to save someone, you know?”

Izuku nodded, muttering quickly as his hand flew across the page. “Ok,” he said after about a minute, “Do you know yet if you’re able to adjust your power output?”

Toogata shrugged, “I’ve never tried before.”

Izuku put his notebook away, “That’s what we’ll start with then. Try punching the next punching bag using your strength, but don’t break through it.”

Three punching bags later, and Toogata still hadn’t managed to throw a punch without destroying anything. Izuku rubbed the bridge of his nose, “Ok, I think we need a new approach. I noticed the last few times, the red veins only appear in the arm you’re punching with. Is that where you’re focusing your quirk?”

Toogata nodded, “I’m used to only powering parts of my body at a time, since that’s how I use my intangibility.”

“Ok, well then this is probably going to be counterintuitive, but try using your quirk to power your entire body at the same time.”

“Ok…” Toogata said skeptically, but shifted into a battle stance. Within a few seconds, red veins had appeared all over his body, but they disappeared a few seconds later, only to be replaced by crackling white lightning.

“What the…” Toogata’s eyes widened and he lost control of his quirk, the lightning fizzling out into nothing, “What was *that* ?”

Izuku was smiling widely, “That was your quirk! Apparently, spreading out the power allows it to release more energy, almost in a static electricity kind of way. This slight release will probably also adjust to your capacity for your power and how much you’re using. It’ll be interesting to see once you learn to adjust your power output if the lightning disappears when you’re using 100% and increases the lower you go, because that would indicate that your quirk can autoregulate in order to not harm your body. That would be so cool!”

For the next hour, Toogata practiced spreading his quirk through his

whole body until he could hold it for a full five minutes. He was sweating, but smiling, and Izuku felt like he had a pretty good concept of Toogata's quirk now.

"You're quirk is so cool, Toogata!" Izuku said when they decided to call it a day, "It's almost like it's two separate quirks entirely!"

Toogata's eyes widened minutely and he laughed nervously, "I'm sure it's nothing *that* special, right?"

Izuku raised an eyebrow, but brushed off Toogata's weird behavior when he didn't add anything.

"See you tomorrow, Deku!"

Izuku smiled and watched Toogata leave, "Yeah, see ya!"

Izuku couldn't sleep.

The more he thought about Toogata's quirk, the more it bugged him. According to everything he'd studied on quirk theory, it was theoretically possible to have an unrelated mutation appear later in life, but it was much more likely for a mutation to happen when the quirk first appeared in childhood. If Toogata's quirk did mutate at his age, it should have just been a more powerful version of permeation or something similar to it, not super strength. The more likely scenario was that someone in Toogata's family had a similar quirk and it just hid in his genes until now, but he'd said no one in his family had a strength quirk of any kind when Izuku had asked. So why had Toogata's quirk mutated in such a weird way?

Izuku sighed and swung his feet out of bed. If he wasn't going to be able to sleep anyway, he might as well use the time to research similar quirks and see if something like this had ever happened before. Even if he didn't find anything to satisfy his curiosity, he'd probably get some creative ideas on how to help Toogata.

The first half hour of searching didn't bring up anything too interesting. Most strength quirks functioned similarly to Death Arms's quirk, simply increasing strength and durability. They also all manifested in childhood, not as a mutation nearly a decade later. He was about to give up and try to go to sleep again when he noticed a promising article on a decades old hero.

Nana Shimura was just beginning her hero career when her quirk

underwent a rare mutation, increasing her strength and speed exponentially. This was odd enough on it's own, but even more so when taking into account that her quirk, Float, had nothing to do with strength or speed.

Izuku looked deeper into Shimura, analyzing her quirk Float, which wasn't anything like Permeation, and trying to figure out how hers mutated because maybe that'd tell him something about how Togata's did. He found an old photo and almost screamed when he saw a younger All Might in his skinny form draping an arm around her. He read the article and ran his hands through his hair.

"Nana Shimura taught All Might."

Now that he thought about it, Toogata's quirk was eerily similar to All Might's and All Might seemed to be teaching him. It was probably that Nighteye reached after Toogata's quirk mutated the way it did, because that would make sense.

But what if it wasn't.

Izuku almost didn't want to keep looking because he *had* to be wrong. What he was thinking just *couldn't be possible.* He numbly entered more search terms until he tracked down the hero who trained Nana Shimura.

"...manifested a strength aspect to his quirk in his second year at UA…"

No. It couldn't be. *It wasn't possible!* He looked at who had trained that hero.

"...took a three year break from hero work when her quirk unexpectedly mutated."

If there had ever been any possibility that Izuku would get to sleep that night, it was long gone. He tracked the line of heroes and their mentors, each suddenly manifesting a strength quirk that inexplicitly got stronger with each hero mentored.

When he finally got to the dawn of quirks and the trail went cold, Izuku let out a deep exhale. As impossible as it seemed, as ridiculous as it sounded, he couldn't deny it anymore.

There was a quirk that could be passed on.

Quirkless

Chapter Summary

Izuku has a crisis.

Something was different about Deku.

Mirio watched as Deku looked through case files with almost robotic precision and gave a few ideas for quirk improvement to him and Sir's sidekicks, but the quiet muttering and the bright smiles he'd come to associate with Deku were nowhere to be found. He also kept looking at Mirio oddly. Sometimes it was like he was sad? At other moments, it was almost as if he was angry? But then the looks were gone and Deku was back to being almost normal, except quieter. Mirio couldn't figure it out. Maybe Deku had a bad dream last night? Or maybe he just didn't sleep well? Whatever it was, it had to have been big, but at the same time... how big could it have been if he hadn't even left the agency?

Mirio thought for a moment. He should probably ask him or something, right? All Might was always telling him how important a smile was to being the next symbol of peace. He said that taking care of people's spirits was just as important as taking care of their bodies, so...Mirio looked at Deku for a minute before walking up to him and clapping him on the back.

"Hey Deku, why so glum?"

Deku jumped in surprise and looked at him nervously, "Sorry, I was lost in thought. What did you say again?"

"I was just noticing you're a bit off today." Mirio explained sheepishly. "Did something happen?"

Deku's eyes widened slightly before he forced a wobbly smile onto his face, "I just didn't get much sleep last night is all."

"Nightmares?"

"Research." Deku said, "Speaking of, I've got some cases I wanted to go over again. I'll see you later!"

Mirio watched in confusion as Deku practically ran down the hall.

Well, that was weird.

Izuku felt bad for avoiding Toogata, but he couldn't help it! Every time he looked at him, all he could think was that Toogata had been born with an amazing quirk that would make him a wonderful hero and then decided that wasn't good enough and was literally *given* another. All while Izuku, who had been wanting to be a hero his entire life, had to deal with everyone telling him he was worthless and incapable of being a hero simply because he didn't have a quirk.

He took a deep breath as he closed the door to his borrowed room. Why did Toogata get to have two quirks? In what way was that fair? Izuku thought back to that day on the rooftop when he asked All Might if he could be a hero too and had to quash down his anger before he screamed. All Might *knew* that there was a quirk that could be passed on, but still told a little boy that his dream of being a hero was absolutely impossible.

Izuku didn't blame him for being reluctant to pass his quirk to a quirkless kid he'd just met, but did he *have* to give his quirk to someone who already had one? Why couldn't All Might have gone around talked with groups of quirkless kids and picked his successor that way? He could have seen which ones had heroic potential, which ones would be grateful for the opportunity he was giving them, and which would make good use of his amazing quirk. He even had his skinny form so no one would know that All Might was even looking for a successor!

But instead, All Might had taken one look at Toogata, who was already one of the best students at UA, and decided to make him even *more* powerful. It just wasn't fair! Izuku ran his hands through his hair, wincing when his fingers caught on the tangles. He knew he wasn't being fair to Toogata. With how highly Nighteye thought of him, it was entirely possible it was *Nighteye* who reached out to All Might and suggested Toogata as a potential successor. It probably wasn't like Toogata *asked* to receive All Might's quirk. Izuku didn't know if he wished Toogata had rejected it or not. On the one hand, it would have been better to give someone quirkless that opportunity, but on the other, who could reject an offer like that from the number one hero himself?

Izuku sighed and got out his laptop. He was tired, angry, and frustrated, but all of that was drowned out by the self-pity that he felt as he compared himself, the scrawny kid doomed to misery the

moment he was born with two toe joints, to Toogata, the lucky hero with two amazing quirks. Could Izuku even be worth anything if he didn't even have one quirk?

Group Chat

12857: *(Deku)*

Guys, this probably seems like a random question, but would you like me better if I had a quirk?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

What's this about, Deku?

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Is "Kacchan" giving you trouble again?

12857: *(Deku)*

No, it's just...you guys are the first people I've ever met who don't judge me because I'm quirkless, and I appreciate that. But I can't help but think, if I had a quirk, wouldn't I be more useful? Wouldn't you like me better if I wasn't so useless?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

You're *not* useless, Deku! I know you've been told all your life that quirkless and useless are synonymous, but they're not! You have so many useful skills that you've gained because you are smart and work hard, not because of anything you were born with. You don't need a quirk to be useful and you don't need a quirk for us to like you!

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

I think what Joke's trying to say is that we would like you exactly the same whether you had a quirk or not. You are the same person with or without extra toe joints, so you don't need to worry that we'd like you better if you woke up tomorrow puking rainbows.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Yeah, Deku, you're our friend because of who you are, your personality, and your amazing analysis. All of which would be the same even if you had a quirk, so to us at least, you'd be the same old Deku you are today.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

So, are we gonna talk about what brought this up?

12857: *(Deku)*

It's really nothing, guys. I was just thinking about how hard my life's been and about how it'd be so much easier if I just had a quirk. Sorry to bother you guys.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

You're not bothering us, problem child.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Yeah, we're always here for you because we love you almost as much as Eraser loves me!

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Joke!

Izuku stopped chuckling when he heard a knock at his door.

“Deku?” Nigheye’s voice said, “Is it alright if I come in?”

Izuku hurriedly wiped away his tears, “Yeah.”

Nighteye poked his head through the door. Anyone who didn’t know him well would think his expression was stern, but Izuku could recognize the concern hidden behind the scowl, “I saw the group chat.”

Izuku exhaled heavily, “I forgot you could see that.”

Nighteye came and sat next to him on the bed, “So, what’s wrong? You don’t normally struggle with your quirklessness.”

For a minute, Izuku considered lying. Considered saying something like that Kacchan had reached out or he’d seen an anti-quirkless post or something. Or maybe he should tell the truth. Tell Nighteye he knew about All Might’s quirk, assuming Nighteye knew about it, and that it was really unfair that Toogata gets two quirks while Izuku has to go without. Instead, he did neither of those things.

“I-i guess I’m just jealous?” he said softly. Izuku knew All Might’s quirk was supposed to be a secret and he didn’t want to deal with the awkwardness if Nighteye and All Might knew he’d figured it out. “Toogata’s quirk was already powerful before...before it mutated.” A look of guilt flashed across Nighteye’s face. So he *did* know. Cool. “I just, I always wanted a quirk so it would help me be a hero. I’m still going to try to be a hero without one, but it’d be *so much easier* if I just had a superpower, you know?”

Nighteye was silent for a long moment and Izuku was starting to regret ever speaking up. Of course Nighteye would probably feel guilty about recommending Toogata for All Might’s quirk instead of Izuku, he should have thought of that. Stupid.

“What would you do,” Nighteye said slowly, “if you got a quirk.”

The way he phrased it meant it could be interpreted as what would he have done if he had gotten a quirk like he was supposed to, but Izuku knew what Nighteye was actually asking. *Should I talk to All Might and*

Toogata and tell them I was wrong?

Izuku shook his head slightly. It was Toogata's quirk now and Izuku wasn't about to take that away from him, but...what would Izuku have done if he had been offered All Might's quirk before Toogata had gotten it? Izuku's mind blanked at the idea. What would he have done? A year ago, he would have jumped at the opportunity, saying yes without any hesitation, all for the chance to be a hero.

But what if he had? If All Might had offered him a quirk of his own, he never would have reached out to the hero underground. He never would have become Deku the analyst. And he definitely wouldn't be on track to become the first quirkless hero. He would have used the quirk well, he knew that. He would have found creative ways to use it and he would have been able to save a lot of people, more than he'd probably save quirkless, but…

But then, in ten years, a little kid coming home from a devastating doctor's visit wouldn't be able to google *quirkless heroes* and see someone like them with an actual license. That little kid would have to go through the same hell that Izuku went through going up, wanting to be a hero with no indication that it was even possible for someone like them.

"I don't think I want a quirk." Izuku said before he had a chance to overthink the whole thing. "My life hasn't been easy, but it's not any different than what other quirkless kids face. I want to be able to give hope to people like me and prove that quirkless doesn't mean useless. I want little kids like me to have hope given to them, rather than have to stubbornly make their own like I did. Does that make sense?"

Nighteye smiled and nodded, looking relieved, "You're a good kid, Deku. You're going to make an amazing hero."

Izuku smiled and let out a breath, "Now that that's settled, I have a few ideas on how to help Toogata improve his quirk…"

Similarities

Chapter Summary

Dinner with the Midoriyas

Chapter Notes

Fair warning, there are vague spoilers of events in the manga as well as Illegals. Like I said, they are very vague (mostly because I haven't actually read all of Illegals yet) but they do exist.

Inko Midoriya had insisted on having Eraserhead, Ms. Joke, Mr. Brave, and Sir Nighteye all over for dinner before the planned raid next week. Shouta didn't see the necessity of it, but she'd insisted she be able to spend time with the heroes who were responsible for bringing her son home alive and he hadn't been able to say no. It shouldn't be too painful, right?

"Oh dear," Midoriya-san said with a mischievous glint in her eye, "I do believe I've forgotten a few key ingredients for the desert. Aizawa-san, Fukukado-san, would you mind running to the store and picking them up?"

Nevermind. Shouta caught Deku smirking out of the corner of his eye and turned to glare at him, to which Deku responded by pasting an innocent look on his face, an effect which was totally ruined by the way his mouth twitched at the corners. Traitor.

"Of course, Midoriya-san! We'd love to!" Fukukado said gleefully, "Come on Eraser, let's go shopping like an old married couple."

"The sooner we leave, the sooner we can get back." Shouta said sullenly.

"Have fun you two!" Nakamura was trying not to laugh, but was failing miserably. Even Sasaki was smiling. Shouta sighed, how was this his life?

Deku gave them a list and Shouta rolled his eyes as they left. Yep, the problem child was definitely in on it.

"So Eraser," Fukukado grabbed his arm as she walked, "Are you excited for your new class this year?"

Shouta hoped nobody mistook them for a couple, though he didn't think anyone would, if only because of their different fashion sense. He was wearing a black shirt and bright pink sweatpants while she was wearing a white and blue striped romper with flowing sleeves. He thought it looked rather good on her, but he wasn't going to say that out loud. Honestly, Shouta didn't know how she thought this relationship would work when they were obviously so different. A relationship with her would take him so far out of his comfort zone it wouldn't even be funny.

"I don't know." He stepped around a puddle. "Most of them have powerful quirks, but you know that's no guarantee of success in the hero industry."

She nodded, "Yeah, I've had a lot of students over the years who think being a hero will be easy just because they can shoot fire or bend metal with their minds. If that was all it took to succeed as a hero, the licensing exam would have a *much* higher pass rate." She sighed. "I may not be as trigger happy with expulsions as you are, Eraser, but I do try to get in through my students' heads that heroism isn't just sunshine and rainbows like they've been taught to believe."

"That's why I always threaten expulsion on the first day." Shouta said. "Even when I don't end up expelling anyone, that threat stays with them. Whenever they're tempted to think they already know what the hero industry is, they'll remember that the first day of hero school was nothing like they expected."

"Maybe it's because we're underground heroes," Fukukado jumped over a crack in the sidewalk and Shouta rolled his eyes, "but I feel like we've got a unique perspective about what heroism is outside of fame and calling out special moves. It's dangerous and difficult and you can't save everyone." She frowned. "Sometimes I wish the students understood that. As it is, it's always a shock the first time they encounter actual danger or watch someone die in front of them. It's something they have to experience to really understand, just telling them won't cut it."

Shouta thought back to his friends, one of them dying on an internship before he ever had the chance to become a real hero, "I didn't understand either, at first…"

Fukukado brought both hands up to her mouth, "Oh, Eraser! I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to…"

He shook his head. “It’s ok. It’s a part of what made me the hero and teacher I am today.” He thought for a moment, “It’s difficult, because I still miss him, but it’s not like it’s something I can’t talk about.”

She looked at him softly, “Still, I’m sorry for bringing up bad memories. Do you want to hear a joke instead?”

He glared at her as she grinned, “What do you call a fake noodle?”

“I really don’t care.”

“An im- *pasta* ! Get it Eraser?” She laughed and grabbed his arm to pull him into the store they’d finally arrived at.

Shouta sighed heavily, but turned away to hide a hint of a smile, “Why did you even decide to go the underground route, anyway? With your loud personality, you could’ve easily been a daylight hero. Maybe you could’ve even had a side job as a comedian like Mic does as a radio host. It fits your quirk well enough.”

“Hmm,” Fukukado looked up from the shopping list she’d been studying, “I was always told I’d be a good comedian, but to me saving people was more important. I didn’t want to be a hero to be famous, because if I was worrying about how to be famous, I wouldn’t be worrying about how to be the best hero I can be.”

Shouta hadn’t been expecting that answer. If anything, he’d been expecting her to make a joke about it and move on, not give him a genuine answer stemming in her beliefs about fame and heroism. Maybe they weren’t so different after all…

“Me too.” He said awkwardly, “Mic always makes fun of me and says I chose to be underground because I hate the media, which is definitely true,” he cut off Fukukado who’d been about to tease him, “but it was more because I didn’t want to deal with having to constantly watch how I was portraying myself when all I really wanted to do was save people.”

“Well, Eraser,” Fukukado said as she punched him lightly in the arm, “I think you’re doing a pretty good job so far.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Shouta rolled his eyes, “Now what were we supposed to buy?”

He couldn’t help watching Fukukado as she found everything on the list. He hadn’t known she was capable of taking things seriously. Her

attitude had always made him think that everything was a joke to her, the same mindset that had made him expel many of his students, but here she was proving him wrong. She laughed, apparently, because she chose to, not because she didn't understand that people's lives were at stake every time she put on her hero costume. Shouta had known her for almost as long as he'd been a hero, but...it was starting to seem like he really hadn't known her at all.

Shouta wasn't quite sure how to feel about that.

"They've been gone for a while…" Izuku said nervously, "You don't think they ran into trouble, do you?"

"Well, there's two options here," Nakamura said as he helped chop vegetables, "either Eraser killed Joke and is now hiding the body, or," he slammed the knife down on the table, making everyone jump, "she killed him."

"I'd prefer if she killed him, the world needs all the laughter it can get," Sasaki sighed, "but unfortunately I think the other possibility is much more likely."

"Oh don't be so depressing!" Inko said. "Maybe they realized they're both madly in love with each other and ran off to Tokyo to get married."

"And didn't invite us?" Nakamura put his hand to his chest in mock betrayal, "I thought I was going to be the best man!"

Izuku laughed, "Yeah, right, you're more like the drunk uncle who gives an embarrassing toast."

"Shut up! Like you wouldn't be the ring bearer!"

"Actually," Inko said with a smile, "I'm pretty sure he'd be the flower girl."

"Mom!" Izuku yelped. Sasaki chuckled while Nakamura bent over in laughter and Izuku glared at them. "Nevermind. Everyone out! You're all corrupting my mother."

Just then the door opened, "Hey, what's everyone laughing about? Don't tell me I missed an awesome joke!"

"Don't worry, Joke," Nakamura yelled, "It was just Midoriya-san

laying out a sick burn!”

Fukukado had a pout on her face when she entered the kitchen, “No fair!”

Aizawa entered, “Just as long as she’s not burning dinner.”

Everyone stopped and stared at him for a moment before Fukukado’s face split into a wide grin, “I didn’t know you had a sense of humor, Eraser.”

He raised an eyebrow, “If you didn’t than you’ve obviously never heard of my logical ruses.”

“I think she meant a sense of humor that other people would find funny.” Sasaki said blandly, causing everyone to burst out laughing again while Aizawa scowled.

During dinner, Inko quizzed each of the heroes on what they were going to do to keep Izuku safe. Izuku wanted to tell her she didn’t have to worry, he was getting really good at combat and each of the heroes had constantly drilled into his head the importance of hanging back and observing so that he wasn’t about to recklessly run into a fight. But at the same time, his mom was letting him do this, despite the fact that it was hard for her, so she deserved to know that he was going to be well protected.

Once everyone had been stuffed to Inko’s satisfaction, Izuku grabbed his duffle bag from his room. They’d decided it was easier for him to just leave with Eraserhead for his final internship, considering it was officially starting tomorrow. Inko stood by the door with tears in her eyes and scooped Izuku up into a big hug.

“Come home safe, ok?” Her voice shook as she hugged him tighter. “I love you.”

Izuku nodded and hugged her back as he started crying too, “I’ll be ok, Mom, I promise. I’ll show those villains who’s boss without doing anything stupid, ok?”

Inko sniffed and looked at her son proudly, “I’m glad you’ve found what makes you happy, Izuku.” She then turned to Aizawa. “I’m trusting you to bring him home safe.”

Aizawa nodded solemnly, “I care about your son and I would never let anything happen to him. Not if I can help it.”

Aizawa's eyes widened as Inko launched forward and wrapped her arms around his waist. He looked helplessly to the other heroes, who were watching in amusement as he struggled to know what to do with his hands. Eventually he settled on lightly patting Inko on the back, "Ok, um, we should probably get going."

Inko pulled back with a shaky smile, "Good luck!"

Izuku followed his friends out the door with a smile. He was finally going to be a hero.

What else do you need?

Chapter Summary

> Izuku starts his internship with Eraserhead and makes some final preparations for the raid.

“Deku, I have something for you.”

Izuku looked up from where he was looking over the analyses for the villains they would be fighting tomorrow night to see Eraser standing in the doorway, holding a silver metal case. He walked over and set the case on the desk Izuku was working at.

“Normally we wouldn’t give you this until after school started,” Eraser shrugged, “but I think you’ll agree that almost nothing about this situation is normal, so we rushed the order.”

Izuku looked between Eraser and the case in confusion. Eraser rolled his eyes and gestured for him to open it. Izuku hesitantly complied and sucked in a breath when he saw what was inside.

It was his hero costume. It consisted of a sleeveless dark green bodysuit with black panels running down the length of the suit on both sides and an open collar. It had knee-high dark red boots with black armored sections on the thighs and toes. The fingerless gloves went all the way up to just above his elbows. They were the same dark red as his boots but the black armored sections were on his forearms so he could block attacks easier. They also had black knuckledusters built in to give more power to Izuku’s punches. The utility belt for his smoke bombs and flash grenades was black and red, while the knife holsters on his hips were all plain black. He had a holster on his right thigh that held a spring loaded grappling hook similar to the one he’d borrowed from Yaoyorozu during the entrance exam. There were empty holsters on each thigh and a green face mask with a black and red geometric pattern that made Izuku look at Eraser questioningly.

“The extra holsters will be for your guns, once you’re licensed,” Eraser responded, “And the mask is sound canceling, with a mic on the inside. When you’re wearing it, we’ll be able to hear you through the comms, but anyone outside the comm system won’t be able to. This way you can murmur as much as you need to without alerting enemies to your position. There’s a button on the side that will turn

that feature off in case you need to talk to civilians."

Izuku nodded. "That's smart. I had a few problems with that on previous internships, so this'll be good." He looked at Eraser hopefully. "Can I put it on?"

Eraser gave him a look, "I wouldn't have given it to you if you couldn't, problem child. You need to get used to the feel of it before the mission, anyway. Meet me in the gym when you're done and we'll spar."

Izuku nodded and got dressed once Aizawa left. He took a minute to look at himself in the mirror and smiled behind the mask. He looked like a hero.

Shouta hid a proud smile in his capture weapon when Deku walked into the gym in full costume. The kid really looked intimidating decked out in dark colors with weapons strapped all over him and Shouta felt a brief flash of pity for all the villains who's first meeting with him would be in a dark alley.

Without any warning, Shouta grabbed his capture weapon and ran forward. Deku's eyes widened slightly as he brought his arms in front of him to block a kick, then grabbed the capture weapon and wrapped it around his forearm, using it to pull Shouta closer. He threw a punch at Shouta's gut, but hadn't let go of the capture weapon, so Shouta dodged the punch and yanked hard, making Deku stumble and creating an opening for Shouta to throw him over his shoulder.

"Good," Shouta said, "you're moving pretty well. Is the costume causing any problems or impeding your movements in any way?"

Deku shook his head and waited for a moment, then his eyes widened and he pressed the button on the side of his mask.

"I forget you couldn't hear me without comms." He laughed, "Um...no, the extra weight on my feet and hands will take some getting used to, but nothing is chafing or digging anywhere, so I think that's good, right?"

Shouta nodded, "All right, let's go again and get you used to the extra weight when you're fighting."

They spent the next few hours sparring and by the end of it, Deku was moving as easily in his costume as he could move without it and had

gotten a feel for how to grab all his weapons. After that, they spent most of the rest of the day experimenting with the grappling hook so Deku wouldn't accidentally die if he had to use it.

"This is going to be so cool to use in the middle of a fight, not just to get around!" Deku rambled once they'd finished, "I could probably use it to fly at opponents and increase the speed and power of my punches and kicks. I wonder if there could be a way to control the velocity? I'll have to look at the design and maybe talk to the support department when I get to UA…"

"You can worry about incorporating the grappling hook into your fighting style after school starts," Shouta interrupted, "for tomorrow, just use it as a mobility aid."

Deku nodded with determination, then looked up at Shouta, "Um...thank you. By the way."

Shouta raised his eyebrow, "For what? Making sure you don't die?"

Deku fiddled with his hands, "I mean, that too, but… Thank you for helping me be a hero. And for being my friend. I was pretty depressed before and...and then you guys reached out and basically rekindled my dream. Even if it was just that, it'd be more than enough, but then you guys actively took me under your wing and helped train me. I just...thanks."

Shouta looked at Deku softly and ruffled his hair, "Go get dressed, problem child. You need to get a good night's sleep and I'm sure you're exhausted after today."

Deku gave him a bright smile and he knew the kid had seen straight through his apathetic exterior. He watched Deku leave to go to the locker rooms and Shouta couldn't help but feel grateful that the problem child had weaseled his way into his life.

Izuku's whole body was buzzing with nervous energy. The past few months had been beyond his wildest dreams. Ok, well, not really. His wildest dreams involved him spontaneously developing a quirk and going on to become the world's greatest hero, even better than Kacchan, but those dreams were in the same vein as fantasy novels in that Izuku knew they were unrealistic and would never have the possibility of actually happening. Well, except if All Might had chosen him to receive his quirk apparently, but he was still kinda reeling from that discovery.

Izuku shook his head. Reality was much better than his dreams anyway. He was on track to become the first quirkless hero. He'd gotten into UA, he'd learned to use weapons, he even had a hero costume! Everything was falling into place and Izuku was the happiest he'd been since the doctor had told him to give up on his dreams when he was four years old.

But no matter how hard he tried, Izuku still couldn't help but feel like Eraser and the others would wake up one day and realize that he wasn't worth it. They kept telling him that he was skilled and would be an amazing hero, but they had to be wrong. Izuku was nothing, a nobody, just a pebble on the side of the road in someone else's story. All this luck and success was just setting him up for devastating disappointment when his heroes inevitably realized how useless he actually was.

Izuku stilled as an even worse idea occurred to him. What if this was all just a practical joke? What if Kacchan and the others had somehow impressed Eraser and the others and they were all laughing behind his back as they built up his dream only to take it away at the last minute? What if they were just pretending to be his friends even though they really hated him and were well aware of how useless he really was?

He distantly realized that his brain was too tired to work correctly and was jumping to conclusions that wouldn't make any sense if he'd slept properly, but at the moment that was just a simple observation two steps removed from reality. The hypothetical betrayal felt all too real as tears began to leak from Izuku's eyes and soak the pillow as he struggled to breathe in the dark of his room. Why? Why would they do this to him? He really was worthless if he couldn't see through such an obvious ruse to begin with. Why did he ever think anyone would actually *want* to be friends with him?

Izuku didn't notice that his sobs had gotten louder until someone came in his room and turned on the light. He shoved a hand over his mouth to try to contain the sound. He really was hopeless wasn't he? Now he'd woken someone else up with his stupid crying and he was being such a bother and why? Why was he so useless?

He felt the bed dip as another person came and sat down beside him and a hand gently carded through his hair.

"Deku?" Eraser's voice was soft and full of concern, but Izuku couldn't help but wonder how much of that was faked, "Hey kid, what's

wrong?”

Izuku let out another sob and Eraser pulled him up and into a hug. Izuku clung to him on instinct as he started babbling incoherently and Eraser whispered comfort as he continued running a hand through his hair.

“No, we’re not gonna leave you, kid.” He said softly. “We really do care about you. I don’t know where you got the idea that this is all a joke or if that’s even what you’re saying, but it isn’t. We would never do that to you. We would never betray you, Deku. Ok?”

Eventually, the reassurances managed to make their way into Izuku’s anxiety addled brain and his sobs gradually reduced themselves to sniffles. Now, with the lights on and Eraser beside him in ridiculous cat printed pajamas, his thought process made a lot less sense. He giggled and Eraser raised one eyebrow.

“What’s so funny, problem child?”

Izuku giggled again and gestured helplessly to Eraser’s pajamas. Eraser looked down at his outfit like he’d forgotten what he was wearing and sighed, “If you tell Joke about this, I will personally make sure they never find your body.”

“They,” Izuku hiccuped, somewhere between a laugh and a sob, “they have kittens on them!”

Eraser rolled his eyes, “Yes. They do. And unless you would like me to buy you a pair to match, I would advise you shut up about them.”

Izuku was full on laughing now, “Eraserhead, this big bad serious hero, sleeps in kitten pajamas!”

Eraser scoffed, “I can have kitten pajamas if I want, problem child.”

Izuku stared at him with wide eyes, “Do any of your friends know?”

Eraser glared at him, “Again, if you tell anyone, Deku, they will never find your body. I have a reputation to maintain.”

Izuku smiled, “That would be perfect merch! Imagine going to a hero convention and there’s a booth just selling Eraserhead brand kitten pajamas!”

Eraser groaned and shook his head, “That would be a nightmare. No.

Never. That is not happening.” He sighed and looked at Izuku. “Are you feeling any better?”

Izuku stilled. He’d almost forgotten why Eraser was sitting on his bed in his ridiculous pajamas. After a long moment he nodded, “I guess I don’t know what came over me. I still feel like I don’t deserve you guys sometimes. Well, most of the time, actually. I guess it only makes when your brain isn’t working quite right.”

Eraser nodded, “I get it. You’ve been told your whole life that no one would ever care about you expect your mom and that attitude isn’t going to go away overnight.” He leaned back so he could look Izuku in the eyes. “But just know that we really are here for you. Not because we have to be, but because we genuinely like you. I know just words aren’t enough, but I hope someday you’ll be able to see how important you are to us, ok Deku?”

Izuku nodded. The anxious thoughts still clung to the back of his mind like a stubborn piece of sludge, but he could see past them now at least. He took a deep breath and smiled, “Thanks Eraser. I think I’m ok now. I think we’d better try to sleep, though. Tomorrow’s gonna be a long day.”

Eraser nodded and ruffled Izuku’s hair one last time before he stood up, “Good night, Deku. Don’t be afraid to wake me up if you need anything.”

Izuku nodded, “Alright, I’ll let you know if I desperately need to take a picture of your pajamas to send to the group chat.”

Eraser paused at the door and looked incredulously at Izuku, who was grinning widely. After a long moment he scoffed and rolled his eyes.

“Goodnight, problem child.” He said fondly.

“Goodnight, Eraser.”

Izuku buried himself deep in his blankets as Eraser turned off the light and closed the door. He was asleep long before his anxiety could take over again.

The Raid

Chapter Summary

The long anticipated drug cartel raid.

Chapter Notes

I wanted to see what you guys came up with before showing you what I had in mind for Deku's hero costume, plus I was a little insecure over my drawing skills (and before you complain about that, I literally traced a body off google, then drew the costume over it).
So, anyway, this is kinda what I was envisioning when I described Deku's costume last chapter.
Also, don't worry, the kitten pajamas will be making a return!

Izuku checked his weapons for what felt like the millionth time as he and Eraser waited at the police station for the other heroes to arrive. While the raid wouldn't start for a few more hours, everyone was meeting here one last time to go over the plan and make sure everything was ready.

The Doraggo drug cartel was one of the biggest suppliers of black market opioids in Japan, and there was a risk that if they didn't wipe it out all in one go, it would act like a hydra and grow back even stronger than before, so this was a much larger operation than most raids. The cartel had five main bases in Tokyo, so the heroes and police would be split into teams to raid each of them simultaneously. Most of the teams had only two or three heroes, depending on the size of the base, but the team assigned to the main base was much larger because that's where they leaders were.

The police hadn't been able to find any information on the leaders and their quirks, just that they would be in the building tonight so they needed Izuku to be on-site to give a live analysis to the heroes. Eraser was coming for much the same reason. It wouldn't matter what quirks the leaders have if they couldn't use them.

Nighteye had been assigned to read the head villain's future to help make sure they weren't missing anything important, while Mr. Brave and Ms. Joke volunteered to go with them. Nobody had wanted to argue because they were both close to Deku and everyone knew how protective they could get. All in all, their entire little group had been

assigned to the same base and Izuku was practically vibrating in nervousness and excitement.

“Are you ok?” Eraser tried to mask his concern behind a raised eyebrow, “You haven’t stopped moving since we arrived.”

Izuku forced himself to stop bouncing in place, “I’m just a little nervous. I know I’ve been going on patrols with you guys for a while now, it’s just…this is the first time I’m really going to be facing villains, you know?”

Eraser glared at him, “I do *not* know, considering that you have been ordered not to engage.”

Izuku waved his arms wildly, “I know that! I’m not going to pick any fights, I swear! But I am going to be in close quarters with these villains and there’s a chance they might come after me if things go south.” He unbuttoned one of the pouches on his belt and re-fastened it almost immediately, just so he’d have something to do with his hands, “I’m excited, but I’m also scared, you know?”

Eraser’s glare softened, “I’d be concerned if you weren’t.” He sighed. “The fact is that what we do is dangerous. It’s worth it to protect people, but there is always the possibility that things will go wrong and we won’t make it home. It’s always difficult for students to learn that, especially ones who love the idea of being a hugely popular hero. The fact that you’re scared is a good sign that you’re prepared for what we’re going to see in there.” He looked away, “I’m proud of you.”

Izuku’s eyes widened, “What?”

Eraser scoffed, but smiled, “You heard me the first time, problem child. If you’re going to make me repeat myself maybe you have less potential than I thought you did.”

He stiffened as Izuku flung himself forward and wrapped his arms around him. He’d awkwardly lifted a hand to pat the kid’s hair when he heard a shutter click and looked up to see Ms. Joke and Mr. Brave standing in the doorway, grinning smugly.

Ms. Joke thumbed through her phone, “Oh, this is prime blackmail material right here!”

Izuku turned bright red as Eraser jumped up and glared down Joke, “Delete it.”

Ms. Joke, “What Eraser? You don’t want all your students knowing your a giant softy as heart?”

She ran away from Eraser as Brave finally collapsed on the floor laughing. Izuku joined in, enjoying the last lighthearted moments before he would finally embark on his first real mission.

“Ok, remember, Deku,” Eraser whispered, “You are supposed to stay with at least one of us at all times. Don’t go off on your own.”

Izuku nodded, “I understand. Don’t worry, Eraser, between all four of you and my mother, no one is going to let me do anything reckless.”

Eraser narrowed his eyes, “Problem child…”

Izuku rolled his eyes and sighed, “Fine, I won’t go off on my own, ok *Dad?”*

Joke had to practically suffocate herself to not give away their position with her laughter as Eraser turned a bright red and tried to hide his face completely in his capture weapon. Izuku smirked and high fived Brave.

“All right,” Nighteye cut in, “Deku, you and Joke will enter through the vents, Eraser and Brave will go through the front entrance, and I’ll cover the back in case anyone tries to leave. Keep your radios on and alert everyone of any problems you run into.” He looked at the others, who all nodded. “Let’s go.”

Izuku followed Joke up the fire escape and onto the roof, crouching next to a vent that was large enough for them to crawl through. Joke carefully unscrewed the cover and set it to the side, then got on her hands and knees and crawled in, Izuku following close behind. After a few feet, there was a vertical shaft they had to go down, so Izuku grabbed his grappling hook and lodged it in the wall. Joke grabbed onto his legs and lowered herself into the shaft, pulling Izuku down along with her as he gradually let out the tension. When they landed, Joke shuffled into a side tunnel to allow Izuku room to land and he pressed a button on the side of his gear to release the hook from where it was lodged and retracted the line, then crawled after Joke.

According to his mental map, they were getting close to the center of the building, which was where the leaders were likely to be. Through the radio, they heard grunts and curses as Eraser and Brave entered the building and started to take out the muscle. They followed a faint

light and soon arrived at a large vent. Joke looked through for a moment, then flattened herself against the side to allow Izuku to squeeze past just enough to see through the vent.

The vent looked out over a large room with a large desk covered in cash and questionable substances. Behind the desk were two men and a woman and the way they were surrounded by dozens of guards all looking toward the door made Izuku fairly confident that they were the leaders.

“Ok, I have eyes on the leaders,” He said, thankful for the mask that canceled his voice, “There are three of them, but they’re surrounded by about two dozen thugs, so proceed with caution.” Joke started working on unscrewing the vent while Deku observed the people below, “About half of the thugs have mutant quirks, but most of those are standing far away from the door, so they probably don’t know that Eraser is here. Most of the rest were included on the list of members we already gathered. The three leaders are standing away from the door, one of them is tall red-haired man who looks pretty muscular, but not enough to make me think he has a strength quirk. The second one is also male, but he has a wolf mutant quirk, so most likely fights close combat and uses his teeth as weapons. Be careful of his sense of smell. The last one is a woman with a high black ponytail, she’s short, but looks strong and doesn’t have any physical manifestations of her quirk.”

“Understood,” Eraser grunted, “We’re almost at your location.”

“I’ll engage the villains now and try to take out some of the mutant quirks.” Joke said, “That way they’ll be distracted when you burst in.”

Eraser gave the ok and Joke pushed the vent out. It fell to the ground with a large crash and all eyes turned to look as Joke jumped down and started to fight the nearest villains. Laughter filled the air as she used her quirk to pick them off easily and Izuku stayed in the shadows, muttering strategies and observations. The leaders were hanging back from the fight for now, but Izuku knew that probably wouldn’t last long.

All of a sudden, one of the villains slammed his hand into the wall, turning it to magma and Izuku let out an undignified yelp as he fell into the room. He landed in a roll, but was right in the middle of the fight.

“Deku!” Joke yelled and Izuku shifted into a battle stance and grabbed

his knives. He had a lot more training than he had when he'd been attacked on his internship with Joke. A villain tried hitting him with a series of sparks from his hands, but Izuku dodged, then ran forward and slashed the man across his palms. He tried to let loose another stream of his quirk, but screamed as the sparks aggravated his injury. Izuku smiled slightly and used the butt of his knife to knock him out before moving on to his next opponent.

"You can't win this, you know that." A man said and Izuku turned to see the red-haired leader slowly advancing on him, "You might as well give up now."

Izuku was filled with despair. Of course they couldn't win! He was just a quirkless deku and he was here with, what? Four heroes? What did they think they could do against one of the biggest drug operations in Japan, especially when they all had such cool quirks. Before he knew what he was doing, Izuku had dropped the knife and held up his hands in surrender.

Wait. Why was he surrendering?

He shook himself and looked around to see Eraser was glaring down the red-haired villain and it clicked, "The red-haired villain has some kind of persuasion quirk. I think he can convince you of any lie he tells. He told me that we couldn't win and I didnt even think to disagree. Keep your quirk on him, Eraser, I'm gonna knock him out."

"Deku!" Eraser yelled, probably to tell him to *not* run toward the stupidly dangerous villain. He was probably right, but Izuku ignored him as he grabbed his other knife from it's holster and switched it into his right hand as he ran toward the villain, who was rambling, trying to convince him to give up. Izuku used his small size to his advantage and crouched to slash at the man's stomach. When he jumped back to dodge the knife, Izuku leveled a kick at his knees, making him stumble so that Izuku could reach his head and use the same trick he'd used earlier to knock the man out with the butt of his knife.

"Note to self," he muttered, "add some kind of tranquilizer to the costume."

"Deku, are you ok?" Brave yelled, he was currently fighting the wolf mutant leader, who had jumped in front of the woman leader, growling about how he needed to protect his boss.

"Yep, I'm just down a knife for now," he replied. A movement in his peripheral vision caught his eye and he saw the woman slipping out

through the now-destroyed side wall, “Guys, the main leader is getting away, I’m gonna follow her.”

“Deku!” Eraser swore, knocking out his villain and chasing after the kid, “Seriously, problem child? What did we specifically tell you *not* to do?”

The woman led him through a maze of hallways before suddenly turning around and facing him, “Big mistake, hero.” She jumped and bounced off the wall, coming around to kick Izuku in the kidneys.

“Some, ow! Some kind of elasticity quirk.” He muttered as she continued bouncing around and hitting him, “Most likely not very good at fighting without it, considering how, ow, engrained it is in her fighting style.”

Suddenly she started laughing, “Nice of you to join us, Eraserhead.” Izuku looked behind him to see Eraser standing in the hall. “However, you’re out of luck.” She stuck her bottom lip out in a fake pout, “Too bad you can’t erase my quirk without erasing your friend’s as well.”

Izuku’s eyes lit up as Eraser gave a terrifying smile that was enough to make the woman retreat a few steps, “Good thing my friend is quirkless, then, isn’t it?”

The woman’s eyes widened and she jumped, but immediately fell back to earth as Eraser activated his quirk. Izuku took advantage of her stumbling to run forward and throw her over his shoulder and she hit the cement with a cry. Undeterred, she jumped to her feet, but Izuku had been right that she wasn’t used to fighting without her quirk. She would seemingly forget that she couldn’t use it and try to jump around out of habit and would leave a wide opening for Izuku to take advantage of every time that happened.

All of a sudden, she was wrapped in white fabric and her arms were pinned to her sides. Izuku gave one last kick so that she was lying on her side on the ground and couldn’t get any purchase to get out of the bindings.

Eraser used one hand to keep the tension on his weapon as he put in eye drops with the other, “Good work, Deku.” He glared down at him. “Also, you’re grounded.”

“What!?” Izuku yelled incredulously.

Eraser nodded, “We told you *not* to run off on your own, and then you

did. Hence, grounded."

"You're not my dad." Izuku said. "You can't ground me!"

Eraser raised one eyebrow, "I mean, if you'd prefer I can call your mother right now and give her a play by play of exactly what went down so she can ground you herself."

Izuku waved his hands in front of him frantically, "Alright, alright, I get it, I'm grounded."

Eraser smirked and they both turned as Nighteye came strolling down the hall, "The police have already arrested almost all villains onsite. Which one is the leader?"

Eraser gave a nod toward the woman on the ground and Nighteye crouched in front of her. He touched her cheek, then cupped her chin roughly to force her to look at him, "It appears our information was accurate. There does not seem to be any indication in the future that the cartel will recover."

An officer came to retrieve the leader and wrap her in quirk suppressants before taking her outside to the fleet of waiting cop cars. Izuku and the other hero followed and met Joke and Brave outside along with Detective Tsukauchi.

"Thank you so much for your help, heroes." He smiled."Especially you, Deku, we couldn't have done it without you."

"But that doesn't mean I approve of you running after a villain leader with zero warning, Deku." Eraser said sternly.

"Oh, come on, Eraser!" Joke laughed. "Don't pretend like you're not proud of the kid."

Izuku smiled widely when Eraser sighed, but didn't deny the accusation, "Come on, problem child, it's time to go."

Izuku stumbled after him, "What do we do now? Just go home?"

Eraser turned around quickly and gave a terrifying grin, "Now it's time for the absolute worst part of hero work."

Izuku tilted his head in confusion and Eraser's smile grew, "Paperwork."

Izuku gulped.

UA

Chapter Summary

The first day at UA begins!

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Izuku is finally starting UA! There is a lot that happens today, so it's going to be a few chapters long. I also decided it worked better for my plot if the first heroics lesson took place on the first day as well, even though I know that's not how it goes in canon.

Izuku took a deep breath before stepping through the front gates of UA. He was finally here! He hunched his shoulders slightly, trying to avoid as many other students as possible as he made his way to the main building. Maybe that nice girl Yaoyorozu from the entrance exam would be in his class? Maybe Kaachan wouldn't be? Izuku shook his head, he shouldn't get his hopes up.

As he climbed the front steps, he fiddled with the tie that he just hadn't managed to get right before coming to school today. Unfortunately, with his eyes busy looking at his neck, he didn't manage to see the last step. What a way to begin his first day at UA.

Izuku tried to maneuver his momentum into a roll like Joke always told him to do if he was falling on a parkour run, but instead of the familiar feeling of a cement landing, he found himself turning over and over again in midair.

"Oh! I am so sorry!" A girl's voice said, "I was just trying to catch you using my quirk because I didn't think falling on the first day of school was a good omen! I'm so sorry, I've messed everything up!"

Izuku had now managed to right himself and was floating in midair, sitting cross legged and smiling at the trippy feeling of hovering several feet above the ground, "You have some sort of anti-gravity quirk, right? That's so cool!"

She looked at him with wide eyes, "You don't mind?"

Izuku shook his head, "I'm a little dizzy, but otherwise, this is fun! You have such an awesome quirk!"

The girl smiled and pressed her fingers together and Izuku felt his gravity suddenly return as he landed in a crouch. Must be some kind of five point contact quirk…

“My name is Ochako Uraraka!” She said as Izuku stood and brushed himself off, “What’s your name?”

“Izuku Midoriya.” Izuku was thankful that being around Joke and her incessant flirting had somewhat desensitized him to talking to women, otherwise he would be a mess right now! “Umm, where are you headed? What class are you in?”

Uraraka smiled, “Class 1A. I really only passed the exam by the skin of my teeth. That zero pointer was something else, wasn’t it?”

Izuku rubbed the back of his neck as they started walking, “Actually, I wouldn’t know. I was admitted on recommendations, so our exams were a little different. You guys fought robots, right?”

Uraraka nodded, “Yep, it was insane! There were different sizes and strengths of robots, all worth different point values, but then there was this zero point robot. You’d think it’d be tiny, right? Just something to trip over and get in the way, but it was the size of some of the buildings! I got trapped under some rubble and had already gone over my quirks limits.” She shuddered, “I managed to scrounge up just enough strength to use my quirk to escape and run away before it crushed me, but I ended up passing out for about five hours after the exam. The lecture Recovery Girl gave me was almost as scary as the zero pointer!”

Izuku laughed, “Yeah, she can be pretty intimidating when people don’t take care of themselves. I *really* never want to get on her bad side.”

They kept chatting idly as they tried to find the 1A classroom without getting lost. They got there a few minutes before the bell and Uraraka opened the giant door easily, probably using her quirk to help. She walked in without hesitation, but Izuku stood frozen by the door.

“It’s the first day and you’re already scuffing up school property, you cretin!”

“You’re kidding me, right?” Kacchan smirked. “Did your old school put a stick up your ass or were you just born that way?”

Iida sighed, “Let’s start over. My name is Tenya Iida and I went to

Somei Private…”

“Somei, huh?” Kacchan leaned forward threateningly, “You must think you’re better than. I’m gonna have fun putting you in your place.”

Izuku gulped, he knew exactly how terrible it was to have Kacchan have to put you in your place. He seriously felt bad for Iida.

“Midoriya!” Yaoyorozu waved to him from where she was talking to the ice quirk user from the recommendation exam, “It’s so awesome you made it in! Did you end up having to take the normal exam as well?”

“No, he didn’t.” Iida said. “At least, I didn’t see him there.”

Midoriya stood frozen from all the attention, but smiled hesitantly at Yaoyorozu, “Umm…no, I got in on my first try. It’s good to see all of you again.”

“What the fuck are you doing here, *Deku?”* Kacchan growled.

Izuku flinched at Kacchan’s tone, but before he could respond, Iida was already speaking, “Oh! *You’re* the famous Deku-san?” He bowed deeply, “My brother Tensei speaks very highly of you.”

“Tensei?” Izuku tilted his head in confusion. He thought for a minute, did he know a Tensei that was related to Iida? A hero maybe? Wait, didn’t he think Iida looked kinda like a pro at the entrance exam? What was the nickname he’d given him…? Mini-Ingenium!

“Oh! Ingenium!” Izuku laughed, “Yeah, he’s fun to talk to. I tend to work more with his underground sidekicks than I do with him, though.”

Kacchan’s scowl deepened.

Shouta’s normal cup of morning coffee never seemed to be enough on the first day of school. Already, he’d had to stop four third year students from pranking the first years, and had to deal with several students accusing him of being lost and wandering into UA on mistake. Yes, he knew he looked like a hobo, but come on! UA’s security measures wouldn’t allow a random homeless person to just walk in!

He was almost at his classroom. Time to see how quickly this batch of newcomers would notice him. He was just about to grab his sleeping bag when he heard a series of small explosions coming from his class.

“What the fuck are you talking about, Deku?” A loud voice screamed and Shouta suddenly understood exactly what Deku had meant when he said he could just tell who was using his name as an insult, “Why would actual pro-heroes ever want to associate with a quirkless loser like you? Just who do you think you are?”

“Please Bakugo! Such behavior is unbecoming of UA students!”

“Shut up four-eyes!”

“Please, Kacchan!” Deku said, “Just calm down!”

Shouta didn’t wait for his students to notice him as he normally did on the first day of school. Instead, he slammed the door open with his quirk already activated and a glare strong enough to kill. Deku was hunching in on himself like he always did when he was feeling anxious and a blond boy was towering over him, hands still smoking from the use of his quirk only moments before. He was staring at his hands in confusion as the rest of the class looked on in shock.

“If this is how you think it is appropriate to treat your fellow students,” Shouta said, “then maybe you shouldn’t be at UA at all.”

Deku looked up at him and shook his head frantically, pleading with his eyes for him not to expel the boy, Katsuki Bakugo if Shouta remembered correctly from the class role he’d been given. Shouta grit his teeth. On the one hand, this kid was the reason that Deku would never truly realize how talented he was and had bullied him for at least a decade. On the other hand, if Shouta expelled the brat now, Deku would blame himself for his expulsion, which wouldn’t be healthy.

Shouta took a deep breath and released his quirk. He would give the brat until the end of the day. Hopefully by then Bakugo would have given him a concrete reason for expulsion and he could talk to Nedzu. He’d still probably have to talk to Deku and try to prevent him from blaming himself, but that would be more doable if Shouta had a specific instance that day to point to.

“Everyone in your seats. This kind of behavior will not be tolerated, nor will wasting time.” He strode to the front of the class. “Rational students would understand that.”

“Huh?” Bakugo sneered, “And just who the fuck are you?”

Shouta glared at him, but it was Deku who answered, “This is Eraser! I mean, Eraserhead! He’s our teacher!”

Shouta glanced at him softly, “Problem child, when we’re at school, you can just call me Aizawa-sensei.” He looked over at the rest of his students, “For the rest of you who don’t know me, my name is Shouta Aizawa, otherwise known as the pro hero Eraserhead. Deku knows me because we’ve worked together before. You’ll probably find that’s a pattern with him. Anyway, let’s stop wasting time and just get to it.” He pulled out his sleeping bag and retrieved a gym uniform from inside. The drama of that reveal had probably been lost since he didn’t arrive to class bundled up, but oh well. “Put these on and head outside, we’ll start with a quirk assessment test.”

He then turned on his heel and walked out of the classroom and down the hall, not waiting for the students to catch up.

Izuku shook his head and smiled as Aizawa explained that they couldn’t waste time on pointless ceremonies. Classic Eraser. He resisted the urge to chuckle when he saw the other students confused and terrified faces. They obviously hadn’t seen the guy give a stray cat half a sandwich to lure it into his capture weapon so he could take it to the vet.

“Here at UA, we’re not tethered to traditions. That means I get to run my class however I see fit. You’ve never gotten to use your quirks in physical exams before, that’s just not rational. Bakugo,” Izuku hoped he was imagining how his teacher’s voice was laced with hatred, “you got the most points on the entrance exam. What was your farthest distance throw with a softball in middle school?”

“Sixty-seven meters.” Kaachan’s eyes were lit with challenge.

“Try doing it with your quirk.” Aizawa handed Kaachan an electric softball and motioned for him to stand in a circle that was painted on the field. “Anything goes, just stay in the circle.”

Kaachan smirked, “All right, you asked for it.” He wound up the ball, letting it loose with a scream and an explosion, “Die!”

Izuku’s eyes widened, he’d known Kacchan was powerful, but that was something else!

“All of you need to know your maximum capabilities,” Aizawa drawled. His phone beeped as the ball landed and he showed the screen to the students, looking slightly disappointed. 705.2 meters. “It’s the most rational way of figuring out your potential.”

“Woah!”

“I want to go!” A lively student with pink hair and skin exclaimed, “That looks like fun!”

“Yeah!” Another boy said, “We can use our quirks as much as we want!”

“Fun?” Aizawa said seriously, “Idiots. Today you’ll compete in eight physical tests to gauge your potential. Whoever comes last has none and will be expelled immediately.”

The students gasped and Izuku covered his mouth with his hands to hide his smile. Aizawa was trying to scare them into doing their best and make sure they took the exercise seriously. If the last place could still prove they had potential, Aizawa wouldn’t expel them, but they didn’t know that.

Izuku was tapped on the shoulder by an invisible hand and he looked over to see a floating uniform, “Deku, right? You knew Aizawa-sensei before. Is he really serious about this?”

Izuku carefully schooled his expression and shrugged, “He has the highest expulsion rate of any teacher in the history of UA. He doesn’t have any patience for students with zero potential.”

Yaoyorozu looked at him oddly with one eyebrow raised. Apparently she’d caught onto the fact that he hadn’t really answered the question. He smiled slightly and winked and she nodded and returned the smile. They both turned to look at Aizawa-sensei again.

“Wait a minute, ribbit.” A girl with green hair raised her hand, “Bakugo implied earlier that Deku is quirkless. How is it fair to have all of us use our quirks when he won’t be able to?”

Izuku curled in on himself. He’d hoped to keep his quirklesses a secret for a while longer, now they were all going to think he didn’t have any right to be in the hero course, especially if he managed to come in last on the assessment test.

Aizawa only smiled, “Hagakure,” The invisible uniform stood up a

little straighter, “is your quirk going to help you run faster?”

“N-no, Aizawa-sensei.”

He nodded, “And Mineta, is your quirk going to help you throw a ball farther?”

A short boy with purple balls for hair shook his head.

“You’ll all realize that while quirks are helpful and influence your potential, they are not everything and will not be useful for every situation. You have to train both your body and your mind to make up for that. I personally do not think that Deku will get last place even if the rest of you use your quirks, but that is neither here nor there. His strengths lie in his mind. Therefore, at the end, there will be a ninth test. Deku will try to create a strategy for you, as a class, to take me down. If this strategy works, he will be proven to have potential, even if he comes in last in the physical exams. In addition, if any of you do poorly in the physical exams, this strategy exercise will be your last chance to prove to me that it’s no mistake that you’re here. Understand?”

The students nodded and glanced at Izuku in pity, apparently already writing him off. There was no way that a group of students would be able to defeat a pro. Izuku simply ignored the stares. He wasn’t planning on getting last in the physical tests. Aizawa wanted the students to go all out, so that was what he’d get.

Strategy, Strategy, Strategy

Chapter Summary

Izuku leads his classmates in a strategy exercise.

Chapter Notes

Look at this amazing action shot of Deku!

The students looked up at the list Aizawa had projected with the students names, ranks, and scores in shock. Izuku had narrowly beat Mineta, even though he'd been able to use his quirk in at least the repeated side-step. Mineta burst into tears, only stopping when Ojiro hit him over the head with his tail and reminded him about the strategy exercise.

"Alright Deku, do you have a good understanding of your classmate's quirks?" Aizawa asked. When Izuku nodded he turned to the rest of the class, "I will go inside for five minutes and when I return, you will try to take me down." He turned and walked away. "Good luck."

All eyes turned to look at Izuku, who smiled, "Ok, so here's what I have in mind…"

"Why should we listen to you, Deku?" Bakugo stepped forward, explosions popping from his hands, "You're just some quirkless nobody."

Izuku took a deep breath, "I may not have an awesome quirk like you do, Kacchan, but," he screwed his eyes shut, "that doesn't mean I'm useless!"

There was a long moment of silence before Bakugo huffed, "Whatever nerd." He turned away from the group, "There's no way I'm taking orders from *you.* If any of you other extras know what's up, you'll refuse to follow this useless freak, but whatever. I'm out of here."

Kacchan went over and sat underneath one of the trees at the far end of the yard. Izuku's eyes lit up. Sitting where he was, Kacchan would be the first thing Aizawa would see when he came out, which meant that he, whether he knew it or not, could serve as a distraction to make the rest of the plan work.

Iida tossed a flare toward where Kaachan was sitting, then turned to

the rest of the group, “That was uncalled for. Deku has quite the professional reputation and he is far from useless. Although,” he turned to Izuku, “the fact that you are quirkless puts your performance during the entrance exam into an entirely different light. I must apologize again for my rudeness that day.”

“It’s not a big deal!” Izuku waved his hands placatingly, then rubbed the back of his neck. “You didn’t know I was quirkless and I try not to tell people if I can help it!”

“Still,” Iida pushed his glasses up his nose, “it was very impressive.”

“Dude,” Kaminari interrupted, “are you really a recommendation student, even though you’re quirkless?”

Izuku nodded, “I had the good luck to get to know a few pro heroes in the last year. They recommended me because of my skills in analysis and strategy.”

“Do you know why there are three of us in this class?” Todoroki’s expression was hard to read, but Izuku figured he was confused, since his position as a recommendation student wasn’t exactly normal.

“Politics,” he gave a small, nervous smile, “Nedzu figured there’d be a mutiny among the parents if a quirkless kid took one of the four normal recommendation spots, so he petitioned the school board to add an extra one this year. They officially approved it after seeing my performance in the exam.”

“Not that this isn’t interesting,” Jiro said brusquely, “but Aizawa-sensei is going to be coming back any minute.”

“Oh, right!” Izuku said, “Jiro, you can hear really well, right?” She nodded. “Ok, go near the door and listen. Warn us when he’s coming back.” Jiro nodded and headed off. “Koda, you communicate with animals, correct?” Koda nodded nervously, “Ok, could you get some birds to see where Aizawa-sensei is now? Go stand on the other side of the door as Jiro so that Aizawa can’t see you both at the same time. That way, even if he cancels one of your quirks, the other will still have theirs and will be able to warn us when he comes.”

“What about the rest of us, dude?” Kirishima asked and a few people took an involuntary step back at the wide grin that spread across Izuku’s face.

“Here’s the plan…”

As soon as the five minutes were up, Shouta headed back outside. It would be interesting to see what the problem child would come up with and would be even more interesting to see if his other students were willing to put aside their biases and listen to him. This was as much a test of his other students to see if they could cooperate as it was a chance for Deku to prove himself, not that Shouta would ever tell them that.

He walked out the doors with his quirk already activated, just in case they were planning a blitz attack, but there was no one there, just Bakugo sitting moodily under a tree. Shouta narrowed his eyes. Where were they?

All of a sudden a few objects were thrown at his face from the tree line and exploded when they were just a foot from his face. Flash grenades! Yaoyorozu must have made them. He closed his eyes as soon as he saw the light, then opened them as soon as he thought it was safe, only for them to start watering tearfully. Did the problem child seriously just use tear gas on him?

As Shouta squinted around, he could slightly see Tokoyami's dark shadow spread out by the main building and could tell he was hiding other students, but couldn't tell who. All of a sudden, a patch of thin air pushed him over. Nice try Hagakure, but he's a trained pro-hero. It's going to take a lot more than that to take him down. He tried to regain his footing like he always did when someone tried to throw him off balance, only to find the ground beneath his feet slick with acid. He sighed, an inconvenience, but not something he'd never faced.

All of a sudden, his muscles tensed as an electric shock coursed through him. Crap, acid was conductive. Where was Kamanari hiding? This would be so much easier if he just knew where to look to cancel out their quirks, but the students were all being careful to hide from him.

A shower of small pebbles started pelting him from the tree line. He looked over in that direction and some of the pebbles slowed down and dropped to the ground as their gravity returned. As if that was a cue, Ojiro, Kirishima, Sato, and Shoji all rushed out from behind trees, equipped with sunglasses and gas masks, and started attacking him, trying to surround him so that he couldn't cancel all their quirks at once.

Shouta smiled and readied his capture weapon to take them down, only to find it wouldn't move like it was supposed to. He looked down at it to find that Mineta had thrown his sticky balls all over it while Shouta was distracted by Uraraka's pebbles. He activated his quirk, which was getting painful since the tear gas hadn't dissipated yet, and the balls fell off. He turned back toward the close combat team as they reached him, only to be blinded again by Aoyama's navel laser. Fine, even if he couldn't effectively use his quirk, he still had enough battle experience to combat his students based on their movements alone.

The close combat team kept up a steady stream of attacks which combined with the laser and tear gas to disorient Shouta just enough that he didn't realize Sero's tape was reaching out toward his ankles until it was already wrapped around him. He was yanked off his feet and he saw Iida running with the other end of the tape as he slid down an ice path, apparently made so that he wouldn't get hurt by being dragged at super speeds across the rough grounds.

Shouta slid to a stop at Deku's feet, who smiled down at him proudly as he stuck a foot on his chest, "Hey there, Eraser! Give up?"

He sighed heavily and nodded, his body going limp in surrender, "Good work, problem child, very impressive." He glared at Deku, "But did you have to use tear gas?"

Deku rubbed the back of his neck nervously, "You're always saying to not be afraid to exploit any weakness in an opponent."

His other students were all yelling and high fiving each other as they gathered around their downed teacher.

"That was awesome!" Ashido yelled.

"Yeah, super manly!"

Shouta extricated himself from the tape and stood, putting eye drops in, "Yeah, yeah. Good work, brats. Don't let this go to your head, though. You'll never have a twenty on one fight in your hero careers." He stood up straighter, "And now for the expulsions."

The group went silent, with the exception of Mineta who started crying again as he stared up at Shouta with fear.

Shouta gave a deranged smile, "It was a logical ruse!"

Several students started crying along with Mineta, who had switched

to tears of relief as Deku practically fell over from laughter.

Yaoyorozu shrugged, “I thought that was obvious from the beginning.”

A bell rang in the school, signalling lunch time and his students practically ran toward the building.

“Deku!” Shouta called out. Deku paused and looked up at him with wide, worried eyes, but Shouta just smiled softly. “You did good, problem child.”

Deku gave a smile so bright that it should be illegal, “Thanks Eraser!”

“Whatever,” He raised one eyebrow, “you’d better get going unless you want to miss lunch.”

“Oh, right!” Izuku started to run to catch up with his classmates and waved over his shoulder, “See you later, Eraser!”

Shouta chuckled and shook his head, heading toward his office to get his super extra strength eye drops and rest his eyes for the next lesson.

Izuku walked through the too-full cafeteria balancing his tray and trying to find an empty table, as had been his habit since he’d been diagnosed quirkless. Trying to sit with other people was just asking for trouble.

Which was part of the reason he was so confused when Uraraka enthusiastically waved at him and motioned for him to come sit by her and Iida. He looked behind him, expecting to see Ashido or maybe Jiro behind him, but the only other person she could have been waving at was some kid with purple hair that Izuku didn’t know. Judging by the slightly raised eyebrow the purple haired kid was giving him, he didn’t know Uraraka either. Which meant she was waving at Izuku. Oh no.

Izuku slowly went to go sit next to her, wondering if this was some kind of trick. It had to be, right? He was quirkless and Kacchan had made sure everyone knew it, so why would anyone be nice to him?

“Deku!” Uraraka said cheerfully. “That was super cool how you came up with a plan to beat Aizawa-sensei! You’re super smart!”

Izuku chuckled nervously, waiting for her to mock him, but she never

did. Instead she turned to her food as if nothing else needed to be said. Izuku just looked at her in shock. What was happening?

“Yes. It was very impressive, although we did have to use some underhanded tricks to win.” Iida frowned. “However, it does appear that was the only way to win.”

Izuku nodded, “Yeah, Eraser’s hard to counter because he can cancel your quirks, so you kinda have to be willing to fight dirty if you’re going to beat him. It’s the same with some villains.” He shrugged, “I’m planning on being an underground hero, so fighting dirty is just kinda part of the package.”

“Still,” Iida said, “I wish we didn’t have to resort to such tricks.”

“Oh, lighten up Iida! We won, didn’t we? And no one got expelled!” Uraraka hit him softly on the shoulder and Iida looked like he didn’t know whether this was normal or if he was supposed to scold her for it.

“Yo! Deku!” Kirishima clapped him on the back as he, Ashido, Sero, and Kaminari passed by on their way to another table, “That was super manley how you beat Aizawa-sensei! We’re looking forward to getting to know you better this year!”

Izuku blushed and looked at him with wide eyes, “O-ok? Um, I really didn’t do much, I mean, I left most of the fighting to you guys.”

“Don’t be so modest, dude.” Kaminari laughed, “Compared to a bunch of hopeless idiots like us, you’re a regular genius!”

“You’re not…”

Sero cut Izuku off by laying a hand on his shoulder, “It’s ok. We have other strengths, but intelligence just isn’t one of them and there’s no use in denying that.”

“Oh!” Ashido smiled, “Let’s go sit next to Bakugo! He’s trying to be all surly over by himself!”

Izuku genuinely hoped Kacchan didn’t explode them immediately. They were too nice to die young.

Shortly after their group left, Yaoyorozu caught Izuku’s eye from across the cafeteria and headed over with her tray, dragging a blank-faced Todoroki behind her.

“Hey Midoriya!” She said as they sat down. “Or do you prefer to be called Deku? It seems to be what Aizawa-sensi and Bakugo both call you, and they seem to have known you the longest.”

Izuku shrugged, “I don’t really care at this point. Deku is the name I use for the analysis work I do for underground heroes, and it’s going to be my hero name, so that’s why Eraser calls me that. You can just call me whatever you want, I guess.”

“I like Deku!” Uraraka said. “It has a you can do it vibe to it!”

Izuku laughed, “You know, you’re not the first person to tell me that.”

“You already know your hero name?” Iida said in surprise.

Izuku nodded, “As weird as it is to already have one, I already have a reputation, so it wouldn’t make any sense to change it. I’ve even already been asked to give an autograph or two.” He immediately slapped his hands over his mouth. Oh no! Why did he say that? They were going to think he was bragging and then they’d hate him and…

The others were staring at him wide eyed and then Uraraka started laughing, “You’re gonna go underground and you’re already famous? Sign me up!”

The others, with the exception of Todoroki, joined in on the laughter. Izuku turned bright red and tried to splutter out some sort of excuse, but the others just ignored him. The lunch hour continued like that with Izuku gradually getting more comfortable around these...friends? Was that what they were? Izuku didn’t know, it still felt like he was waiting for the other shoe to drop.

They were going to walk together back to the classroom, but Izuku let the others go on ahead as he used the restroom. As he headed back, he spotted Aizawa off in a side hallway.

“Deku.” Izuku was glad that Aizawa’s eyes looked a little less red than they had. He still felt really bad for having Yaoyorozu make tear gas during the exercise. “How was lunch?”

“It was great!” Izuku grinned, “Everyone’s really nice. It’s so different from middle school.”

Aizawa scowled but let it slide, which Izuku was grateful for. Instead, Aizawa just frowned at Izuku’s tie, “Problem child, what did you even do to make a piece of fabric look like that?”

Izuku smiled sheepishly, “Well, my dad’s not really around to teach me and Mom never learned so…let’s just say that while you can learn anything on youtube, some things are more difficult than others. Don’t worry though, I’ll get the hang of it.”

Aizawa just huffed and grabbed Izuku’s tie, untying it and retying it much neater while Izuku looked at him in shock, “Problem child.” He shook his head as he tucked the end of the tie under Izuku’s blazer and squeezed his shoulder. “Get to class. You wouldn’t want to be late for your first official heroics lesson.”

“Yes sir!” Izuku said and Aizawa tilted his head like he did when he was trying to hide a smile.

Izuku slipped into the room and went to his seat, unfortunately right behind Kacchan. He still wasn’t quite sure how to feel about him. Kaachan had been his first friend, but ever since he’d made other friends, it had kinda tossed his whole perspective of their relationship on its head, especially since Aizawa and the others insisted that no one who treated him like Kacchan did could really be his friend. Kacchan glared at him as he passed, letting off a few intimidating pops of his quirk before huffing and turning to face forward as the bell rang.

Izuku wondered who their heroics teacher would be. Probably one of the more combat oriented teachers like Snipe or Ectoplasm. Oh, this year was going to be great! A loud bang sounded and everyone flinched as the door was slammed open. Izuku’s eyes widened at the sight of their new heroics teacher, who was grinning at the class in all his muscled glory.

“I am here!”

Battle Training

Chapter Summary

Izuku Vs. Kacchan!

Katsuki scowled as he got dressed in his brand new hero costume. Many of the other boys were gawking at Deku's outfit, especially the variety of weapons strapped all over his body, including two pistols. How did he even get those? More importantly, how did a quirkless loser like him even get into UA?

Yeah, he'd admit that the strategy he'd used to beat the teacher was somewhat impressive, but the nerd didn't even do any of the work. It was the people with quirks who did all the fighting, and that was how it'd always be, so where did the stupid teachers get off on letting a useless loser like Deku into the top hero school in the country! And getting in on recommendations? What kind of a joke was that? This was supposed to be *his* epic origin story, and Deku was ruining it on purpose!

Whatever. Hopefully he'd have an excuse to beat the nerd up during battle training. If not, well, there'd always be after school.

"You all look like heros!" All Might declared proudly as they all stepped out of the tunnel.

Katsuki thought it was odd that Deku wasn't fanboying like everyone else in class. In fact, he almost seemed nervous, like he was trying to avoid looking All Might in the eye or something. Not that Katsuki cared, but it seemed way out of character. On the other hand, All Might's eyes kept lingering on Deku, like he knew he recognized him from somewhere, but couldn't quite place him or something. It was really pissing Katsuki off.

All Might explained that they'd be fighting indoor battles in teams of two and Katsuki tuned him out. Indoor battles, teams of two, don't forget the bomb, got it. Now stop yammering, he wanted to fight already!

He rolled his eyes when he was paired with the four-eyed freak. What was that extra's quirk again? It couldn't have been anything too cool if he hung out with Deku at lunch. All Might pulled out the first two teams to fight with a flourish and Katsuki smirked. Looks like he'd get

to pound Deku into the ground sooner rather than later.

His smile widened as he saw Deku gulp and glance over at him with fear in his eyes, but fell when the nerd suddenly clenched his fists and turned to him with determination. Katsuki gave Deku his best glare before stalking off into the building with four-eyes. This time, he'd make *sure* that loser learned his lesson.

The fake weapon was in a room on the third floor and didn't take long to find. Iida strode up to it and knocked on the side. The bomb made a hollow clanging sound.

"So this is the weapon we're supposed to protect…"

Katsuki scoffed and clenched his fists. He could care less about the stupid weapon, "Hey four-eyes," he kept looking at the door, "do you really think Deku deserves to be in the hero course?"

"You saw how well he strategized." Iida said. "And he *did* get on on recommendations, a feat which escaped even me, so I believe he has earned his spot in the hero course. Why do you seem so angry when it comes to him?"

Katsuki saw red. That nerd was tricking him all these months! Pretending to give up on being a hero, pretending that he'd finally learned how useless he really was, when all along he was training with pro heroes! Why didn't those heroes take an interest in Katsuki? He would obviously be a better hero than *Deku* , everyone said so! So why did the loser get in on recommendations and get a cooler origin story than he did? Deku didn't even have a quirk!

If there was anything that Katsuki was sure about in this exercise, it was that he was going to kill that damn nerd.

"Do you think they want us to memorize the floorplan?" Uraraka asked.

Izuku shrugged, "I don't know, I already did anyway. It's helpful to have a mental map so you don't get lost."

Uraraka stared at him with wide eyes before changing the subject, "You know, All Might's just as cool in person as he is on television! I'm glad he's not threatening to expel us like Aizawa did."

Izuku sat silently for a minute, the paper in his hand becoming

hopelessly wrinkled from how tightly he was gripping it. Between realizing that he'd have to deal with the hero that had tried to crush his dreams for the whole semester and being faced with Kacchan who he knew would try to kill him, his nerves were shot. Suddenly, Izuku remembered that it was probably appropriate to say something when a girl asked you a question, "Yeah. Sure."

Uraraka looked at him with concern, "Are you ok, Deku? You look kinda tense."

Izuku sighed, "It's just we're going up against Kaachan. Plus Iida's pretty strong too. We should be on our guard, who knows what they'll pull."

"Oh right, Bakugo's the one who's always making fun of you."

Izuku nodded, "He can be a pain, but his strength, his confidence, his ambition, not to mention his quirk, they're all so much greater than mine."

"He's pretty mad that you're at UA, isn't he?" Uraraka asked.

Izuku gave a breathy laugh, "Yep. That's why he's going to come after me as soon as All Might says go. It doesn't matter that the safer strategy would be for him to guard the bomb and send Iida out to find us. For him, this is personal and nothing anyone says is going to convince him otherwise." He stood. "But that's why I have to do better. I refuse to lose today."

Uraraka got a strange glint in her eye, "So it's a fated battle between rivals, huh?"

"Not that I'm trying to get you wrapped up in my fight or anything!" Izuku waved his arms in denial.

"Are you kidding?" Uraraka laughed and hit a fist against her palm. "Let's win this!"

All Might's voice came over the speaker, making them jump, "Your time starts now!"

Immediately, Izuku snapped into analyst mode, "Ok, so they're probably expecting us to come in through the front door. Can you use your quirk on yourself?"

Uraraka grimaced, "Only as a last resort. It makes me really sick."

Izuku nodded, then grabbed his grappling hook from its holster, shot it so that it lodged into the wall right above the fourth story window, and handed it to Uraraka, “Ok, so this button will retract it and this one will dislodge the hook from wherever it is. If you need to shoot it again, just aim and press this button right here. Got it?”

Uraraka looked overwhelmed, but nodded, “Is it strong enough to handle both of us?”

Izuku looked up at the building, “It doesn’t need to be. I’ll be going in through the front door and leading Kacchan on a wild goose chase. You’ll find Iida and the bomb. Get it if you can, but if not, just tell me where it is and I’ll try to beat Kaachan and come help you.”

“Are you sure you can handle him on your own?” Uraraka asked worriedly.

Izuku smiled, “Kacchan may have bombs,” he patted the holster on his thigh, “but I have guns.”

Uraraka smiled and nodded before pressing the button to retract the hook and swinging through the open window, pulling the hook through behind her. Izuku waited a moment before walking in through the front door. He’d taken a lot of notes on indoor battles over the years, but even more so since he’d started working with underground heroes. He’d even done an indoor battle during the drug cartel raid, so the setting didn’t scare him. His opponent, however, did.

Suddenly, Kacchan rounded a corner, aiming an explosion right at Izuku’s face. He rolled out of the way, just in time, thankful for the fast reflexes he’d gotten from his specialized training. Thick smoke and dust filled the hallway and through his comm, he heard Uraraka quietly ask if he was ok.

Kacchan emerged from the smoke with a sneer on his face, “What’s the matter, Deku. If you’re afraid to stand up and fight me, maybe a quirkless coward like you shouldn’t be at UA.”

Izuku stood up tall and looked him in the eye, “I knew you’d come at me first and try to take me by surprise.”

Kaachan grinned, “I don’t wanna hurt you so bad that they have to stop the fight,” he yelled as he prepared to throw a quirk loaded punch, “but I wanna come close!”

Izuku grabbed Kaachan's arm and flipped him over his shoulder, "You always use a big right hook to start a fight, Kaachan." He panted. "I know because I've watched you for years. Maybe you should have paid more attention to that notebook you burned and threw away. Those analyses are what caught the attention of the heroes that recommended me." He grit his teeth as Kaachan began to get up, "You can call me Deku, but I'm not the same defenceless helpless kid anymore! From now on, Deku is the name of a hero!"

Kaachan lowered himself into a battle stance, "Deku," he growled, "you're shaking in your boots just looking at me, but you want to fight me anyway." His hands started popping with explosions. "That's why I hate you!"

Kacchan launched himself at Izuku who tried to wrap the capture tape around his ankle. Next, Izuku knew that Kacchan would get impatient and try to end the fight with a big punch, which he dodged. Kaccan was starting to mix up his moves, so did that mean he was worried?

If he couldn't easily predict his moves, it wouldn't be smart to fight him in close range. Izuku turned and ran down the hall before the smoke cleared, trying to come up with a plan. He heard Bakugo scream in rage, "You've been laughing behind my back, Deku! Getting at all these heroes just make me look bad! You're just a quirkless nobody, Deku! You'll never beat me!

Izuku knew that if he went and helped Uraraka now, Kacchan would just follow him. So he had to take him down here. He'd taken down actual villains though, something Kacchan hadn't ever done, so he knew he could do it, just as long as he didn't get too close to Kacchan's hands.

"Stop hiding, Deku!"

Izuku thought back to all the times he'd tried to assure Kacchan that he wasn't trying to compete with him or be better than him, only to get bruises and burns for his troubles. His eyes lit up with determination. Maybe it was time to change his attitude.

"Deku?" Uraraka's voice came over the radio. "Iida knows I'm here, sorry. He's monologuing right now, though."

Izuku nodded and gripped the capture tape. They were probably running low on time. It was time to stop messing around and beat Kacchan. He heard footsteps behind him and turned around to see Kacchan smiling at him as he slowly walked closer.

“Since you’re such a stalker, you probably already know that my quirk works by exploding my sweat, so just imagine what I could do if I had a lot of it.” Izuku’s eyes widened as Kacchan slowly pulled the pin on his gauntlets. “That’s right, these babies aren’t just for show!”

“Bakugo!” All Might’s voice came over the radio, “Don’t do it! You’ll kill him!”

“He’ll be fine as long as he dodges!” Bakugo grinned widely and finished pulling the pin, letting loose a massive explosion.

“Come in! Come in, Midoriya!” All Might was practically screaming through the radio and Izuku hissed in pain. He’d managed to roll behind a pillar just in time to dodge the explosion, but it had done nothing to shield him from the heat. He knew he probably had at least first degree burns all over his body just from being too close to that blast. Who had approved that thing? He’d had to train for months to be able to carry a gun and Bakugo just comes in with enough firepower to blow through the wall?

Kacchan had just tried to kill him! Something finally clicked in Izuku’s brain and he remembered what Nighteye had said. He was right, Kacchan…no, Katsuki, hadn’t been his friend in a long time. Izuku smiled as an idea occurred to him and he silently held himself closer to the pillar as he drew one of his guns from its holster.

“These gauntlets are awesome!” Katsuki cackled. “Even if you give it all you’ve got, you’ll never beat me!”

Izuku waited for the smoke to clear, so he could aim properly. Katsuki would be expecting him to be curled on the ground in the fetal position. It would throw him for a loop when he was nowhere to be seen.

“Huh?” Katsuki looked around then ran over to the hole in the wall and looked down to see if Izuku had been thrown from the building in the explosion, “Deku, where’d you go?”

Two gunshots rang out clearly as Izuku fired, hitting Katsuki with a rubber bullet to each bicep, right where Tsukauchi had taught him would cause enough pain to temporarily paralyze the arm. Katsuki’s eyes widened as Izuku ran at him and swiped his legs out from under him, landing him flat on his back. Quickly Izuku took the capture tape and wrapped it around each of Katsuki’s wrists before standing.

“Bakugo has been captured by the hero team!”

“You’ve always been amazing, Katsuki.” Izuku looked down at Katsuki as his eyes widened at the lack of nickname. “That’s why I had to beat you. I’m coming, Uraraka. Where are you?”

“Fifth floor, hurry! Iida cleared the room of everything except the weapon, so I don’t have any ammo for my quirk!”

Izuku turned and ran, making his way up the stairs as quickly as he could. He could hear Iida laughing evilly and monologuing. He opened his pocket and grabbed a small box of rubber bullets that he kept on him in case he had to reload. He tossed a smoke bomb inside the room to cover him as he ran toward Uraraka and shoved the box into her hands, then pulled out his gun and ducked behind another pillar. Uraraka immediately started pelting Iida with weightless bullets, turning the room into a giant pin-ball machine and forcing Iida to spend all his energy dodging.

“Where are you, hero?” Iida yelled, “You may have taken down my partner, but there is no way I will go down so easily! Hiding is an act of cowardice.”

“Or an act of intelligence,” Izuku said cheekily as he stepped out from behind the pillar and shot Iida in the leg. Oh, Brave would be so proud. Uraraka released her quirk and all the ricocheting projectiles fell to the floor as their gravity returned. She ran over and touched the bomb as Izuku tied Iida up with capture tape.

“The hero team wins!”

“Deku!” Uraraka cried as she flung herself at Izuku and wrapped her arms around him. “We did it!”

Izuku hissed in pain as she squeezed his burns. He’d hardly felt the pain during the fight, but now that the adrenaline was going down he realized just how much having first degree burns over his whole body *hurt*.

“Deku?” Uraraka jumped back. “Are you ok?”

Izuku gave her a shaky smile, then promptly passed out.

You Reap What You Sow

Chapter Summary

Katsuki Bakugo/Consequences

When Izuku woke up in Recovery Girl's office, Aizawa was standing over him with an expression that was an odd mix of relieved, afraid, and absolutely pissed, "Give me one good reason why I shouldn't expel him right now."

Izuku bit his lip. This was what he was worried about since he'd learned that Aizawa had expelled an entire class of first year students for being just like Katsuki, but he just *couldn't* expel him. His entire life, there were only two things that Izuku had known with absolute certainty and those were that all men were not created equal and that Katsuki Bakugo would be an amazing hero. Izuku just *couldn't* bring himself to be the reason that one of those truths came crashing down around his ears. He opened his mouth to say so, taking a deep breath before closing it again.

Would Katsuki be an amazing hero? Truely? Izuku paused, remembering all the times Katsuki had *put him in his place* simply because he had been born weaker. Was that someone who would be able to protect the weak, like a hero was supposed to do? Or was that someone who just wanted a license to beat people up? What about all the teachers who had just watched, praising Katsuki's quirk and pushing all the blame on Izuku for *causing trouble* ? What had they done to make sure Katsuki would be a great hero, besides assuring him that he was better than everyone else? Wasn't it their responsibility to guide him, not Izuku's?

"Because it's not his fault."

Aizawa let out an angry exhale, running his fingers through his hair, "It's not yours either, problem child."

Izuku looked up at him, "I know."

That threw Aizawa for a loop. He looked at Izuku with wide eyes for a long moment before sitting next to him on the bed, "Then why, after everything he's done to you, why does he deserve a place at UA?"

Izuku took a deep breath, speaking slowly as he tried to untangle what

he was thinking, “It’s not his fault that he is the way he is. Did you know that the teachers knew he was beating me up? They never told anyone, especially my mom, even though everyone knew. Katsuki still has a spotless record because it was easier to blame me and they didn’t want to ruin their chances of being associated with such an amazing hero. No one has ever told him that what he’s doing is wrong. They’ve taught him that it’s his right as the strongest to prey on the weak and that there are people in this world that no one should care about.” Izuku looked at Aizawa. “You shouldn’t expel him because he’s never truly had the chance to succeed. He’s still young and it’s not too late. If someone tries...maybe Katsuki can still be a great hero.”

Aizawa scowled and clenched his fists a few times, “Fine,” he said, “But I’m making him go to mandatory anger management therapy.”

He stood and headed toward the door to talk to Nedzu, but Izuku grabbed his hand, “Eraser…” He looked up at Aizawa with a small smile, “Thank you.”

Aizawa rolled his eyes and ruffled Izuku’s hair, “Whatever, problem child.”

He had his hand on the door when Izuku realized one last thing, “Eraser wait!”

Aizawa looked at him with one eyebrow raised.

“Don’t tell him that I didn’t want him to be expelled….” he frowned, “it won’t go over well.”

Aizawa nodded and opened the door, heading down the hall. Izuku sighed and ran his fingers through his hair again.

Hopefully he’d made the right decision.

“Bakugo, would you and your parents follow me, please?”

Aizawa led the three into Nedzu’s office where the principal was already waiting. He’d already talked to him about what Deku had said and they’d come up with a plan. As Deku’s friend, Aizawa would really rather expel the brat, but as a teacher he had to admit it made a grudging sort of sense. It wouldn’t be rational to expel Bakugo when this kind of behavior had been ignored and even encouraged in the past, if Deku was to be believed.

If the brat messed up, however, he'd kick him to the curb.

Bakugo glared at everything in the office as if it had personally offended him, which maybe, from his perspective, it had. He certainly seemed to think that Deku was trying to offend him, even when the kid had done nothing wrong. His mother was just as loud as he was, just less angry, while Aizawa would almost forget his father was there if he didn't physically take up space. It was definitely an interesting family dynamic and it made Aizawa wonder if the schools were entirely responsible for what Bakugo had become.

He stood silently in the corner watching as Nedzu smiled pleasantly at the family, "Thank you so much for coming in. We apologize again for pulling you away from work, but this issue is better addressed immediately."

Mistuki nodded, "It's alright, principal, sir. What's this about, anyway? You were kinda vague on the phone."

Nedzu clapped his hands together, "Well, it seems as though some rather troubling patterns in your son's behavior have come to light and we would like to discuss how these will be addressed moving forward."

"What kind of patterns?" Mitsuki looked at the principal suspiciously, but it was Aizawa that answered.

"His behavior is excessively aggressive and even violent."

"Oh, that's just Katsuki!" Mitsuki smiled. "He's an explosive boy, comes with his quirk."

Aizawa scowled, he saw what Deku meant when he said it was the adult's fault Bakugo's behavior hadn't been checked, "In a battle exercise earlier today, your son knowly used an attack that could have killed or seriously injured his opponent. It is only due to that student's training and quick reflexes that he was able to dodge." Bakugo scoffed and Aizawa glared at him. "It has also come to our attention that he has a history of assaulting that same student in the past."

"Deku lies." Bakugo practically spat the words and it was all Aizawa could do not to strangle him right then.

Nedzu raised an eyebrow at Bakugo, "That may have been what your teachers have chosen to believe in the past, but let us assure you that we will not be guilty of their same failures."

“What does this have to do with Izuku?” Mitsuki asked. “What about the other student in the exercise?”

“Izuku Midoriya *was* the other student in the exercise.” Nedzu said cheerfully. “He was admitted to the hero course on recommendations. I met him before the school year and suspected that he had problems with bullying, which was only confirmed by your son’s behavior. Were you aware, Bakugo, that such behavior could prevent you from becoming a hero?”

Bakugo’s eyes widened in shock and Mitsuki practically started vibrating in rage, “You can’t keep Katsuki from being a hero! He’s perfect for hero work and he’s been working so hard! It’s been his dream since he was a kid!”

Aizawa wanted to scream about how her son tried to crush Deku’s dream for a decade, and what was she doing then? Masaru looked like he was trying to become one with the chair as his wife stood and leaned over Nedzu’s desk, veins clearly visible on her forehead.

Nedzu just held up his hands placatingly, “We are not planning on expelling your son. At least, not today. If you will please return to your seat, we will discuss our next course of action.”

Mitsuki sat back down, but didn’t stop glaring at Nedzu, who was still smiling.

“Perfect! Now, as we said before, these patterns are very concerning and will not be allowed to continue. If young Bakugo here wishes to remain enrolled here at UA, he will be required to attend anger management therapy with Hound Dog, our school counselor, twice weekly during his free period.”

Bakugo jaw dropped, “What?! Why the fuck should I have to talk to some stupid shrink? I’m not fucking crazy!”

“Changes need to be made, Bakugo.” Nedzu said calmly. “And therapy will be the most effective way of assisting you to make those changes as well as monitoring your progress.”

“I’m not going to fucking therapy!” Bakugo slammed his smoking hands on Nedzu’s desk.

“Then you’ll be expelled and may face criminal charges for assault.” Aizawa said simply. “Same goes for if you attend therapy but don’t make any progress. We don’t need heroes running around who are

going to abuse their power."

Bakugo scowled, hands smoking, but sat down. Mitsuki cuffed him upside the head, "Come one, brat, it's your own fault, apparently."

"I'm sure it won't be that bad, Katsuki." Masaru said softly.

Bakugo just scoffed, "We done here, or what?"

"You just need to sign this stating that you understand the conditions of your continued enrollment and that you agree to them and then you'll be free to go!" Nedzu said cheerfully.

The family left as soon as the paperwork was done and Aizawa groaned as soon as the door closed, "Is it wrong that I want him to mess up so I can expel him?"

Nezu hummed and sipped his tea, "His behavior up until now has been cruel, but I believe Deku was right in saying that no one has tried to correct his behavior before. He might have genuinely thought he was in the right, or might simply have not known how to change." He set down his cup and sighed, "I just hope we're not too late."

All Might

Chapter Summary

All Might voices his concerns.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Toshinori didn't know what to think. When he'd first seen a little boy with green hair in the first year hero class, he hadn't thought much of it. The boy was familiar, but he'd been so busy training young Toogata in the last few months that he was having trouble placing him. Toshinori's first thought was that the boy must be a fan or something, someone he had run into at a convention or autograph signing. It would be odd that he'd remember a face from something like that, but it would explain the uncomfortable feeling of recognition that he felt.

But there was a problem. The boy didn't act like a fan. Someone who Toshinori would have run into at a convention would most likely be ecstatic to see him as their teacher, smiling brightly or even asking for an autograph like the other students. Instead, this boy frowned and tried hard not to catch his eye, practically running from the room the moment Toshinori told them to go get dressed.

Then came the battle exercise. Honestly, Toshinori hadn't thought much of having the boy, Midoriya he'd learned, go first. It was just the luck of the draw, but he hoped that maybe seeing the boy fight would help him figure out where he recognized him from.

Watching Midoriya fight the boy with the explosion quirk, Bakugo, was...concerning. All Might listened to their conversation through the radios he had given them and didn't like what he heard. The two seemed to know each other, but weren't friends if the intense way they attacked one another was any indication. And then Bakugo had let slip that Midoriya was quirkless and suddenly it clicked.

Is it possible to become a hero even if I don't have a quirk?

He looked different from the scrawny kid that had clung onto his leg almost a year ago. He had filled out, for one thing, and for another he carried himself with much more confidence than he had a year ago, but he was undeniably the same boy Toshinori had almost considered giving One for All to.

Toshinori had almost stopped the fight right then. He remembered how it had felt to be quirkless, to not be able to do anything because he didn't have any power. Someone without a quirk couldn't dream of facing down such a powerful opponent, but the boy had already done the smart thing and run away. Hopefully he'd have the sense to stay away from the fight and leave the fighting to those who were actually capable of fighting back.

But then Bakugo had cornered him and unleashed an explosion against Toshinori's protests. He felt his heart sink when the smoke cleared and there was no sign of Midoriya on the cameras. This was why it was too dangerous for someone like him to try to be a hero. What had Nedzu been thinking letting him into the hero course?

Midoriya had reappeared, injured but alive, and taken Bakugo down quickly and effectively, although Toshoiri wondered just how he'd gotten permission to use a gun. It wasn't long after that that he was able to execute a winning strategy with Uraraka to take down Iida and recover the bomb. The class had even been a 50/50 split on who the MVP had been, Midoriya or Iida.

So, in short, Toshinori didn't know what to think. On the one hand, Midoriya had won and Toshinori remembered from his notebook that the boy was intelligent, but at the end of the day he was still quirkless, which would always be an insurmountable liability in the field. Surely the other teachers would see it that way too?

All the teachers were gathered in the teacher's lounge to celebrate a successful first day. Powerloader had told him that it was a tradition to come together and talk about their students, making predictions for the upcoming year, and Midnight had even brought a bottle of wine which was being distributed liberally. Nedzu and Aizawa had said they were going to be late, something about taking care of an issue with one of the new students, so Toshinori decided he'd wait until they arrived to breach the subject of young Midoriya.

"Yep!" Midnight laughed, "I'm pretty certain the second years hate me right now. I assigned them to find a piece of pre-quirk hero art and write an essay comparing it to a more modern piece. I'm sure they'll love it after it's done, but you should have seen some of the looks they gave me! Happens every year!"

Powerloader sighed, "At least you didn't have one of your first-years blow something up on the first day. We weren't even supposed to be making anything today! I don't even know how she managed it!"

The door opened and Nedzu and Aizawa walked in. Toshinori thought Aizawa looked a little more tired than usual, but he hadn't known the man very long so he wasn't really sure. What could have exhausted him that much on the first day?

"So what did you guys have to take care of?" Mic yelled from the couch. "Don't tell me you expelled a student already!"

Aizawa sighed, "I wish." He sat down and accepted the glass of wine Midnight offered him. "One of my students is the kid that's been bullying Deku for most of his life."

Toshinori thought the name Deku sounded somewhat familiar. Wasn't that what Bakugo had called Midoriya? Wasn't it also the name of some underground analyst Toogata and Nighteye were working with? What a coincidence! It didn't seem like a very common name.

"What?!" Midnight's jaw dropped. "And you didn't expel him?"

Nedzu clapped his hands together, "Deku insisted we give him a chance to clean up his act before kicking him out and I was inclined to agree. We've made therapy a mandatory requirement for his continued enrollment here." He looked at Hound Dog. "I hope it will be ok that we've made him bi-weekly appointments with you?"

Hounddog nodded, "Sounds good. Talking to these kids *is* my job after all."

"Perfect." Nedzu smiled. "Now that that's out of the way, does anyone have any good stories to share?"

Toshinori was silent for a moment as he debated how to breach the subject of the dangers of having a quirkless student and Powerloader had already launched into a story before he'd figured out what to say.

Powerloader talked about his hyper student who had somehow managed to cause an explosion with a paperclip, a vial of saltwater and a pack of matches, "She just laughed and said explosions were vital for progress. I swear I can already feel my hair turning grey!"

Shouta rolled his eyes. He knew Powerloader was secretly proud, it happened every year. A student would come along, blowing things up left and right and inevitably they'd end up at the top of their class. Powerloader had even once joked the bigger their explosion, the bigger their potential. Shouta didn't understand it himself, but then again, he didn't know anything about support items, so he supposed it

must make sense to someone in the thick of things.

When Powerloader had finished, Midnight laughed and turned to All Might, “What about you, All Might? Any students catch your eye?”

All Might coughed up a little blood in surprise at being addressed directly and sat frozen for a minute.

“I have some…concerns.” He said slowly.

“Hmm?” Nedzu set down his tea cup. “And what would those be?”

“One of the students in the hero course is quirkless.”

The room went silent.

“And that is a problem because…?” Shouta knew he sounded angry, but this was *his* student All Might was talking about. Had he even seen Deku completely annihilate his opponents in the combat exercise, or had he written him off completely as soon as he learned he was quirkless?

All Might looked at him incredulously, “It’s incredibly dangerous! The student almost died because he was put in a combat situation with quirked students!”

“He almost died because his bully was let into UA!”

“Wait,” Mic held up a hand, “are we talking about Deku?”

“Of course we’re talking about Deku! Who else is quirkless here at UA?” Shouta was practically yelling. Deku hadn’t *asked* to be viciously attacked, yet here All Might was acting like it was all his fault.

“The fault for today’s incident, All Might, lies only with the student that attacked him with excessive force.” Nedzu said calmly. “And that student has already been disciplined. It won’t happen again.”

“How do you know that?” All Might turned to the principal, “Every time he is in a fight he’ll be outmatched! It’s dangerous and unfair, to both young Midoriya and those training to be heroes.”

“Don’t talk as if Deku is somehow less than the other students." Aizawa growled. "He has more potential for heroics than most first years I’ve taught and he definitely has more than the student who attacked him!”

“Enough!” Mic used his quirk to be heard above the bickering heroes. Shouto glared at All Might, who was glaring back. “What makes you so concerned about Deku becoming a hero, All Might?”

All Might looked between the teachers like he couldn’t believe he had to explain something so obvious, “Quirkless people can’t be heroes. They’ve never been able to, it’s not their place.”

“Are you even hearing yourself right now?” Shouta said, “How can you be so prejudiced? A few decades ago they said animals couldn’t be heroes either, but I don't here you speaking out against the principal!”

All Might crossed his arms, “Well, what are you basing your opinion off of, huh? It sounds to me like you just want to be inclusive, even if it puts Midoriya and the other students at risk. That’s not kindness, that’s stupidity.”

“Oh that’s rich coming from you.”

“Now, now, Aizawa.” Nedzu said. “All Might raises a valid point. If Deku had not shown potential for heroics, we would not have let him in. Maybe you can explain to All Might why Deku is a good fit for the hero course.”

Shouta laughed humorlessly, “Where do I start? Maybe the fact that he can break down and figure out how to counter a quirk within seconds? Or the fact that he already has his gun licence due to all the hours of training he’s spent with firearms? Training that, need I remind you, somehow wasn't required for Backugo's gauntlets. Or, I don’t know, maybe the fact that Deku convinced the entire underground he was a *goddamn retired pro* for seven months until we finally met him? Is any of that good enough for you?”

“Oh, I agree with you that he’s intelligent.” All Might said, “But that doesn’t mean he shouldn’t stay behind the scenes where he’ll be safe.”

“Safe my ass!” Shouta yelled. “Being a hero is dangerous for anyone, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t do it! You should know that better than anyone.”

“I do know that better than anyone.” All Might said. “That’s exactly why I’m so against this! If even someone with a powerful quirk like mine can be injured so badly in the line of duty, a quirkless kid wouldn’t last a day.”

All Might aparently hadn’t realized he’d powered up his muscle form

until Shouta canceled his quirk and he deflated. Shouta smirked at the confused look on the idiot's face.

A loud rattle of china interrupted them and they both turned to look at Nedzu, who had slammed his tea cup down on the saucer, "That is quite enough of that." he said, "All Might, Deku has been accepted to the hero course and nothing you say is going to change that fact. This is not an inclusion initiative, but rather the simple fact that if I did not believe he could become a hero, I would not have let him in. Aizawa," he turned to Shouta, "I understand that you are upset, but you need to control yourself as well. The last thing UA needs is infighting among it's teachers."

Shouta took a deep breath and sat down as All Might did the same. He glared at All Might, who scowled back at him, and Shouta looked away. He could keep things *civil.*

"I wish the kid had taken my advice…" All Might grumbled and Shouta felt ice in his veins.

"And what advice would that be?"

All Might looked up in surprise, apparently he hadn't planned on being heard. He glanced between Nezdu and Shouta, but it seemed Nedzu was also curious since he made no move to stop the conversation.

"Well, um…" All Might cleared his throat, "I actually met young Midoriya for the first time almost a year ago. He stopped me after I saved him from a villain and asked me if he could be a hero."

"And what did you tell him?" Shouta knew he wasn't imagining the hint of horror in Midnight's voice, but All Might didn't seem to notice.

"I told him it was impossible, of course." All Might said innocently. "It would have been cruel to say anything else. I encouraged him to try to be a doctor or police officer if he was really being honest about wanting to help people."

Shouta stood up and walked out of the room. He didn't need the murder of the number one hero on his resume.

Toshinori watched Aizawa storm out of the room and shook his head. Aizawa would come around eventually. He turned back to his fellow teachers, who were staring at him with a mixture of anger, horror,

and disgust and he furrowed his eyebrows in confusion.

“What?”

Chapter End Notes

> You have no idea how emotionally hard it was for me to write that chapter! The way I see All Might is that he has internalized a lot of the quirkism that he experienced growing up, but never had to surpass that since he was thrust into the "abled" majority. Unfortunately, this also means that his attitudes won't change in just one chapter. On the bright side though, writing this chapter helped me figure out the emotional root of the original novel I'm working on, so there's that.

Venting

Chapter Summary

Eraser complains to his friends.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Group Chat

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Who wants to go out for drinks?

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Long day?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Let's say it this way, if the sun doesn't set right now, I will take Deku's gun and shoot it.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

That bad, huh?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Remember Deku telling us about "Kaachan?"

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

Please say you know who it is.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

He's in my class.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Don't you mean *was* in your class?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

No.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

You didn't expel him?!

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Deku convinced me not to because their old teachers actively encouraged the brat's behavior, but we're making him go to anger management therapy twice a week. If he doesn't improve within the semester, I'm kicking him to the curb.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

As a teacher, I want to say that was the best decision, but as a friend I want you to tell me this kid's address so I can punch him in the face.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

We're heroes, Joke. We can't just beat up children.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

She never said she'd tell Kaachan she was a hero.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Nobody's beating him up… yet.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Also, that's not the only thing that happened.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Oh? What other juicy details do you have?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

I think it's probably best to discuss it in person. I don't necessarily need my opinions of the number one hero immortalized in the group chat.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

What did Toshinori do this time?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

What bar are you at? I'm on my way.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Me too, I'm always down to hang out.

12579 shared their location

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

Am I invited as well?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Sure, but I have to warn you that I will be complaining about All Might the whole time, and I'm not gonna edit it. I know how close you two are, so if that makes you uncomfortable, don't come.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Don't worry old man, we won't hold it against you.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

In that case, I think it would be best for me to sit this one out. Joke can give me the cliff notes version tomorrow.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Will do!

Shouta put his phone in his pocket when he saw Fukukado and Nakamura walk in. They looked around for a minute before spotting him at the bar.

"Hey Eraser," Fukukado slid into the seat next to him while Nakamura sat on his other side, "So, do you want to talk about it?"

Shouta sighed. Normally he wouldn't talk about what was stressing him he'd just… stew for a while until it went away. He didn't even know really *why* he'd gone to the group chat but… if anyone could

understand the unmitigated disaster his day had been, it was these guys. He swallowed the rest of his drink.

“So, Deku’s in my class, right?”

“Right.” Fukukado nodded. “And you said his bully is too?”

Shouta nodded, “I was just walking to class, preparing to teach them about situational awareness like I do every year…”

“Wait, is this the trick you do with that stupid sleeping bag of yours?” Nakamura asked as he grabbed a handful of peanuts from the bar. “I’ve heard horror stories about that thing from interns.”

Shouta scowled, “It’s *practical.* ”

“Doesn’t stop you from looking like a caterpillar!” Fukukado laughed.

Shouta glared at her, “ *Anyway,* I was walking to class when I hear explosions and,” he ran a hand through his hair, “the way the kid said Deku’s name… he said it like he was talking to a bug so disgusting he couldn’t even be bothered to squish it. I had to activate my quirk just to keep him from exploding Deku.”

“Exploding him?” Nakamura tilted his head, mouth full of peanuts.

Shouta nodded, “Remember those burns all up Deku’s arms?” The other two nodded. “The brat’s name is Katsuki Bakugo and his quirk is Explosion, so his hands are basically grenades. His old teachers apparently didn’t want to ruin his chances of being a hero, so did nothing to curb his... violent tendencies. In fact, from what we could tell, they actively encouraged him and purposely created opportunities for him to torment Deku.”

“Those little...” Fukukado was practically vibrating in rage, “That’s not what a teacher is supposed to do!”

“I swear,” Shouta shook his head, “the only reason I didn’t expel him on the spot was because I knew that Deku would blame himself for it and we already have a hard enough time convincing him that not everything is his fault without throwing the expulsion of his childhood *friend* into the mix.”

“Ok...I get that.” Nakamura rolled his eyes. “But is it bad I still kinda wish you’d expelled him?”

Fukukado reached over and cuffed him over the head, “Don’t pay attention to him, Eraser. He doesn’t know the difficulties of raising the next generation.”

“That’s because he *is* the next generation.” Shouta muttered. Nakamura gasped in betrayal as Fukukado laughed and clapped him on the back.

“Alright Eraser, so what happened next.”

“So, I decided to give Bakugo until the end of the day and took the class out for the quirk assessment test, which Deku totally aced by the way. I had him come up with a strategy for the class to take me down and they managed it in less than five minutes. I swear it was one of the most impressive things I’ve ever experienced.”

Fukukado pretended to wipe tears away from her eyes, “That’s our boy!”

“But then he went to heroics.”

Nakamura raised an eyebrow and gestured for him to continue.

“He was paired against Bakugo in a battle exercise.”

Fukukado gasped, “No! Is he ok?”

Shouta rubbed the bridge of his nose, “Now he is. He was brought to Recovery Girl with burns all over his body from an explosion large enough to *blow out a wall* . Why Bakugo thought *that* was a good idea is beyond me, but I don’t have any idea how that kid’s brain works.” He took a deep drink of the beer the bartender had just brought him. “Deku still won, by the way. He actually shot Bakugo and another student. Multiple times.”

Fukukado laughed, “Good for him!”

Shouta chucked, “Yeah, and apparently it was a good wake up call for Deku too. He’s stopped calling him “Kacchan” at least.”

Fukukado and Nakamura cheered and Shouta shook his head at their dramatics. “I was ready to expel him, obviously, but Deku insisted we give him a chance to change.” He rolled his eyes. “I get where he’s coming from, but part of me wants Bakugo to mess up so badly that we’ll have no choice but to expel him” He sighed. “But if he does manage to clean up his act, that’s theoretically better for everyone,

right?"

Fukukado pouted, "A lot less satisfying though."

Shouta nodded solemnly, "A lot less satisfying."

"But," Nakamura leaned toward him, "you promised beef on All Might and you haven't even mentioned him yet."

Shouta scowled so deeply that both Nakamura and Fukukado leaned back instinctively, "Oh, that's coming. All Might is the heroics teacher this year."

"Really?" Nakamura said in surprise. "For some reason I can't really envision him in a classroom."

"I didn't even know he had his teaching license." Fukakado said.

Shouta grit his teeth, "He doesn't. That idiot doesn't even have his teaching license and yet he had the audacity to suggest that Deku doesn't deserve a place in the hero course simply because he's quirkless."

There was a beat of silence before Fukukado stood up. "Where does he live?" She asked, rolling up her sleeves. "I swear, I just want to talk."

Shouta growled, "Trust me, if it wouldn't destabilize Japan, he would already be dead. Both Nedzu and I tried to convince him that Deku was more than capable of being a hero, but it was like he couldn't even hear us. He kept pointing to the fact that Deku got hurt in the exercise as proof that he was weak, despite the fact that Bakugo was clearly *trying* to hurt him and the fact that it was his own damn responsibility as a teacher to make sure no one got hurt!"

"That jerk!" Fukukado slammed her fist onto the bar, earning a halfhearted glare from the bartender. "Who does he think he is?"

"That's not even the best part." Shouta laughed humorlessly and took another drink. "Turns out, All Might first met Deku a year ago, I think around the time he reached out to us. All Might had just saved the kid from a villain and Deku took the chance to ask if he could be a hero even though he was quirkless."

Fukukado's face twisted in sympathy, "Until he met us, no one had ever encouraged his dream. He was probably desperate for any positive reinforcement at that point."

Nakamura nodded, “Of course he’d ask the number one hero for encouragement, All Might is always encouraging kids to chase their dreams in interviews, telling them to reach for the stars.”

Shouta shook his head, “Apparently, he doesn’t live up to his own hype. That idiot thought that the *kindest* thing he could do for this child, who I’ll remind you had just been through a highly traumatic experience, was to violently crush his dreams. Even if he didn’t know about the bullying, he should have at least had more tact than to tell the kid to his face that he could never be a hero.”

“Seriously?” Nakamura scoffed. “Did All Might even ask if the kid had any skills or did he just hear the word *quirkless* and write him off?”

“I’m pretty sure it was the second one.” Shouta said. “He admitted that Deku’s smart, but tried insisting that it’d be far too dangerous for him in the hero course. It was ridiculous!” He shook his head. “Thankfully Nedzu stood up to him. He made it clear that Deku was in the hero course and that fact wasn’t going to change, but we’re going to have to keep an eye on them and make sure All Might doesn’t try to crush Deku’s spirit *again.* ” He sighed. “After the life that kid’s had, I’m not sure how much more he can take.”

Fukukado put her hand on Shouta’s shoulder, “That sucks.”

Shouta nodded numbly.

“Dang it!” Nakamura scowled as he looked at his phone. “I’m so sorry Eraser. My agency just texted me and they need me to come tonight and cover another guy’s patrol cause he got sick. Are you gonna be ok?”

Shouta shrugged and Fukukado draped her arm over his shoulders, “Don’t worry Brave, I’ll take *good care* of Eraser here.”

Nakamura snorted, “Now I’m even *more* concerned.” He shook his head and waved goodbye. “Good luck Eraser. Don’t leave any traceable evidence when you kill All Might!”

Fukukado laughed and Shouta scowled as Nakamura left. When he was gone Fukukado looked at Shouta, “How are you holding up?”

Shouta let out a puff of air, “I don’t know.” He said honestly. “I’m angry, but part of me knows I’m probably blowing things out of proportion because I’m tired. So I either need to punch All Might or sleep. Maybe both.”

Fukukado chuckled and nodded, “Yeah, I get that. Maybe you can dream about punching All Might, that way you can kill two birds with one stone!”

Shouta scoffed, “Yeah, wouldn’t that be great? But is it really satisfying if I’m not punching his actual face?”

Fukukado laughed again, then her expression turned soft, “It’s understandable Eraser.” She said. “You’re allowed to be angry right now. Deku is more than just a student to you, he’s your friend, and I know you see him as a son.” Shouta scowled at that, but Fukukado simply flicked him on the nose and continued. “Don’t even try to deny it Eraser.” She stared at him in mock seriousness. “I see everything.”

That made Shouta roll his eyes and Fukukado only managed to maintain her expression for a few seconds before she burst out laughing.

“No, but seriously.” She weezed as she finally calmed down. “You’re allowed to feel hurt.”

Shouta sighed, “It’s irrational.” he said. “Being hurt and angry doesn’t help anything, it just makes you sloppy and makes you make stupid mistakes.”

Fukukado hit him over the head, “Stop that! Emotions are *not* irrational Eraser. Yeah, if anger is the only thing you’re focused on then you’re gonna have a hard time, but as long as we keep things in perspective, emotions can make life more interesting and satisfying.” She looked at him softly. “You’re angry because you care Eraser, and that’s a very good thing.”

Shouta shrugged, “I don’t know. Doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

Fukako laughed at him and patted his back, “So, are you gonna be ok?”

He sighed, “We’ll have to see tomorrow. I still might decide to kill either Bakugo or All Might as soon as I see their stupid faces.”

She chuckled, “If you get arrested, I’ll make sure to feed your cats.”

Shouta glared at her halfheartedly as she stood, but she just stuck her tongue out at him.

“Come on Eraser, let’s get you home.” she said. “Tomorrow’s gonna be

another long day."

Shouta sighed, but finished his drink and paid. He didn't even tell her to go away as she walked him home, talking his ear off about her students and their first day. She had a second year class this year, apparently, so she was having to make sure they didn't get too big for their britches now that they were no longer at the bottom of the totem pole. He just nodded along, occasionally humming or giving one or two word answers when she asked a question, oddly content to listen to her meaningless chatter.

When they reached his apartment, Shouta unlocked the door and stepped inside, "Goodnight Joke."

"Goodnight Eraser! Be sure to take good care of Deku for me." She smiled softly and kissed him on the cheek. He stared at her for a long moment before she seemingly realized what she'd just done, which made her blush and practically run down the stairs. Shouta's mouth hung slightly open as he watched her leave, his hand still frozen on the doorknob. When Fukukado had made it to the bottom, she glanced back and gave him a shy wave, which he returned numbly.

Shouta didn't close the door until she was gone.

Chapter End Notes

> So, I went ahead and created a series for my fics. So far it's just this and Mastermind: Strategist for Hire, but I really like writing stories that explore what could have happened if those first two episodes went slightly differently.

Therapy

Chapter Summary

Katsuki meets with Hound Dog

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Hey Bakugo!” Kirishima came up to him after English. “Do you want to hang out with us during free period today?”

“Yeah right, shitty hair, like I’d ever hang out with you.” Katsuki scoffed. “Even if I wanted to, I’ve got shit to do.”

Kirishima smiled and shrugged, “It was worth a try. Hey Ashido, wait up!”

Katsuiki rolled his eyes as he watched Kirishima leave with those other high energy extras he’d eaten lunch with the first day. They probably wouldn’t even want to hang out with him if they knew he had to go to fucking *therapy* during free period today. He scowled. Stupid Deku. If it weren’t for him, Katsuki could be sleeping or doing literally anything else right now rather than stomping his way toward some stupid shrink’s office.

The door was plain, tucked away in a less-trafficked part of UA, and had *Hound Dog* written on a metal plate in the center. What kind of hero name was Hound Dog anyway? He considered straight up blowing the door off its hinges, but considering he was supposedly there for anger management, that probably wouldn’t go over too well. He settled for pounding on the door instead.

“Come in!”

Katsuki opened the door and looked around until he caught sight of Hound Dog standing by his desk. Ok, he could admit the guy looked pretty badass, but that still didn’t mean he had to like him.

“Hey,” Hound Dog said. “You must be Bakugo.”

Katsuki scowled, “What’s it you, mutt?”

Hound Dog let out a barking laugh, “Yeah, they warned me about you.

Why don't you close the door and sit down? Or would you rather sit there catching flies."

Katuski slammed the door and stalked over to the couch, throwing himself down heavily. The soft material was probably meant to make him feel comfortable or peaceful or something, but jokes on them. Katsuki didn't *do* soft.

They sat silently for a minute as Hound Dog typed something into his computer. Katsuki tried to get comfortable, but he kept sinking into the couch, so he ended up just clenching and unclenching his fists until he couldn't take being ignored any longer.

"So what?" Katsuki sneered. "You want me to fucking talk about my *feelings?"*

Hound Dog shrugged, "I want to talk about your life, and eventually, sure, your feelings, but this visit is for me to get to know you more than anything else."

"Why do you even have to get to know me?" Katsuki scowled. "You're just gonna try to change me anyway, so why do you need to know who I am?"

Hound Dog tilted his head slightly, "What do you mean?'

Katsuki scoffed, "You fucking know what I mean. You're trying to make me into some vanilla cookie-cutter weakling. You don't really care about what I want, you just want me to be *nice.* " He glared at Hound Dog. "I don't do *nice."*

Hound Dog nodded, "You're afraid we're trying to make you into something you're not."

"I'm not scared!" Katsuki yelled. "And you *are* trying to make me into something I'm not. I have to act exactly how you want me to or else you'll kick me out! You're trying to get rid of my entire fucking personality!"

"Ah." Hound Dog grinned. "So you see yourself as an angry person so now that you're in anger management therapy, you feel like we're targeting who you are as a person, rather than an emotion you feel."

Katuski opened his mouth to disagree, but then thought for a moment. Wasn't that kind of the point? They were trying to change him. They were targeting his personality.

Weren't they?

"Tch, whatever." He crossed his arms and slouched deeper into the couch. "It's not like you're gonna actually be able to change anything. Soon enough everybody's gonna realize Deku's a loser and then they'll just forget about this whole thing and everything'll go back to normal."

Hound Dog nodded, "That *has* been what's happened in the past, hasn't it?"

Katsuki didn't answer. He just glared at the wall, wondering how much trouble he'd get in if he blew it up.

"We don't have to change your personality, if you don't want to."

Katsuki looked at Hound Dog in surprise, but quickly schooled his expression back to a scowl, "What? Isn't the entire point of this to have me singing kumbaya by the end of the semester?"

"Not necessarily." Hound Dog shrugged. "The point is to make sure you don't hurt other people. But the things that make you who you are, like the swearing and yelling, aren't bad in tne right context."

Katsuki looked at him skeptically, "What are you saying? That I can be *nice,"* he spat the word, "and still be a jerk? You must be a bigger idiot than you look if you think that's possible."

Hound Dog chuckled, "Bakugo, there's a big difference between being brash and being abusive. Take me for example," he gestured to the muzzle covering his face, "I'm not really a nice guy. I get so angry sometimes that I forget human speech, and I'm definitely not gentle, even when I'm just with my friends. My aggressive personality comes along with my quirk, same as yours does, but it's not a bad thing because I don't use my personality as an excuse to hurt people, does that make any sense?"

"No." Bakugo scoffed, but it kind did. Maybe therapy wouldn't be so bad if he wouldn't have to change everything about him. It would still be pretty bad, though.

"Let me put it this way." Hound Dog said. "How would you like to be on the receiving end of one of All Might's full power punches?"

"The kind that changes the weather?" Hound Dog nodded, smiling, and Bakugo stared at him. This guy wasn't just an idiot, he was

insane! “That would fucking kill me!”

Hound Dog laughed, “Yep, getting a full punch from All Might would hurt like hell and probably kill you to boot, so why does he still punch villains?”

“He holds back, you idiot!”

Hound Dog nodded and hummed, “So? Objectively, he’s still violent. I mean, he doesn’t try to bring villains in by offering them flowers and holding their hands and singing kumbaya.”

Katsuki threw his hands up in the air, “I guess!”

“So how is that different from your anger?” Hound Dog asked. “Bakugo, if you learn what you do that genuinely hurts people, you’ll be able to hold back on those behaviors just like All Might holds back on his punches, while at the same time maintaining the fierceness and, yes, even the rudeness that makes you who you are.”

Katsuki sat silently for a minute. “So… I really don’t have to lose who I am?”

Hound Dog shook his head, “No, you don’t. You’re in control here, I’m not here to force you to become something you’re not, just to make sure you aren’t going to keep hurting people like you have in the past.”

Katsuki glared at him, “I’m not going to be nice.”

Hound Dog shrugged, “I’m not asking you to be. You’re a brash person, Bakugo, just like me, and if I don’t have to be nice, you don’t either.”

Bakugo scoffed, “So you really think I can be myself and still stay at UA, huh?”

Hound Dog grinned behind his muzzle, “It’s just a matter of honing your bark, but reserving your bite for the villains you fight.”

Bakugo rolled his eyes and laughed, “Shut up, mutt, don’t try to have a sense of humor just cause you think it’s funny.”

Hound Dog laughed again, “Oh, but I am funny.” He stood up and opened the door. “I’ll see you in a few days, Bakugo. Don’t forget what we talked about, ok?”

“I’ll forget if I want to, mutt!” Katsuki yelled. “You’re not the boss of me!”

Hound Dog chuckled and waved as Katsuki stomped down the hall, back toward class 1A. That guy obviously didn’t know what he was talking about. Katsuki couldn’t be nice and angry at the same time, it was just impossible. Besides, even if it was possible, Aizawa and that stupid rat faced principal wouldn’t be happy until they’d squashed his personalilty.

Kirishima was waiting in the hall by the time Katuski got back to the classroom a few minutes before the bell.

“Hey Bakugo!” He smiled with sharp teeth and Bakugo rolled his eyes, “How was your free period?”

Katuski just scoffed and shoved past Kirishima, “Get outta my way, shitty hair.”

Kirishima laughed and stepped aside, “Glad you had fun, dude.”

Katsuki glared, “I didn’t have fun.”

Kirishima shrugged, “Whatever you say, dude. Good luck next class, by the way, I hear Midnight’s a total sadist when it comes to art history.”

“I don’t need luck.” Katsuki huffed, but Kirishima just patted him on the shoulder and went to go sit down. Katsuki found his own seat and put in earbuds for a few minutes. Maybe that stupid mutt was onto something. Probably not.

But maybe.

Chapter End Notes

> Adding a note because I've seen a few of comments on it. Yes, I know about the app. Yes, it sucks. Please don't support them. I absolutely hate updates that aren't actually updates, so I avoid doing that if at all possible.

Reputations

Chapter Summary

Izuku begins his private lessons with the principal.

Izuku gratefully took the offered cup of tea and held it between his hands as he waited for it to cool down to a drinkable temperature. Nedzu was smiling at him across the desk over his own cup, a variety of files and loose papers spread out in the kind of organized chaos Izuku was more than used to from his own room.

“Well Deku,” Nedzu chirped, setting down his cup, “I must say that it’s a pleasure to finally be able to begin our private lessons. It’s not often I find a student I’m excited to teach, so I’m happy you were able to fit me in during your free period.”

Izuku nodded eagerly, “I’m really excited to be learning from you, sir! High Specs sounds like such an interesting quirk and you do a lot of interesting work behind the scenes of the hero community by finding difficult villains or the ones who prefer to stay in the shadows…”

He hurriedly shut his mouth when he realized he was rambling, but Nedzu didn’t seem to mind, “Yes, that is correct. It’s a role you’ve filled yourself, is it not?”

Izuku rubbed the back of his neck, “I mean, not really. I mostly focus more on quirks and combat, not on tracking people down like you do. I did a little work like that on my internship with Nighteye, but I’m not very good at it yet.”

“That’s of no importance.” Nedzu said. “We can’t expect you to be perfect at everything you try without practice! Remember that you have been analyzing quirks for much longer than you’ve been doing other aspects of hero work, so you can’t expect to have reached the same level of excellence.”

“I wouldn’t call it excellence…” Izuku muttered, but Nedzu ignored him.

“That being said, one of the reasons you are here is so we can work on developing that magnificent mind of yours and honing it into a truly terrifying weapon!” Nedzu clapped his hands together. “So this semester, I’ll be teaching you about strategy.”

Izuku nodded, “I’m in your hands, sir, please take good care of me.”

Nedzu smiled, “Perfect. Now, I would like to apologize, first of all, because I took the liberty of looking deeper into your past, especially in light of yesterday’s incident.”

Izuku shrunk in on himself. Now Nedzu was going to find all of his teacher’s old notes on him being a disruption and practically begging to be beat up because he didn’t have a powerful quirk. Teachers always sided with Katsuki, Aizawa was just an exception to that rule.

“I must say that your old school’s treatment of you is shameful.”

Izuku looked up so fast he almost gave himself whiplash, “What?”

Nedzu looked at him seriously, “Your middle school is guilty of gross negligence when it comes to their treatment of you. They hardly even bothered to hide that they fully knew of the mistreatment you were receiving at the hands of your peers, and they appeared almost proud of the fact that they allowed the abuse to continue. You did not deserve any of that, Midoriya. You are highly intelligent, a fact that should have been obvious far before now, but they turned a blind eye to your strengths because of their own discriminatory biases.”

“I’m sure they didn’t mean…” Izuku tried to say quietly, but Nedzu held up a hand to cut him off.

“You tend to give people the benefit of the doubt far too often, Midoriya. No doubt because you have always been treated as if others were in the right for hurting you.” Nedzu stared at Izuku with fire in his eyes. “I beleive you will understand why I, of all people, do not have any patience for discrimination.”

Izuku swallowed heavily and nodded. Nedzu smiled again, “So you can see why I would like to see some justice done on your behalf! I would like to use your old middle school as a case study this semester to teach you about human psychology and how to destroy a reputation.”

“Umm...I admit that learning psychology will be interesting,” Izuku said nervously, “but why would I ever need to know how to destroy a reputation?”

Nedzu took a sip of his tea, “Most villains don’t rate very high in public opinion polls. Say what you will about our society, but there is something to be said that most people recognize that robbing and

hurting people is wrong. However, every once in a while, a villain comes along that is able to shift public opinion in their favor. They often try to portray themselves as doing the wrong things for the right reasons, or by saying that their victims deserve it for whatever reason. In these cases, it can be very dangerous to go after the villain directly. Do you know why?"

Izuku thought for a moment, "Well, if the villain is able to convince people they're doing the right thing, then the public will mutiny when the police and heroes go after them. It's almost like by going after a villain like that, the heroes themselves start acting like villains and the villain is the persecuted hero." He looked up at Nedzu who was staring at him proudly. "Is that right?"

Nedzu nodded, "Exactly, Midoriya. When villains manage to get some semblance of a good public reputation, it is often most effective to target that first so that the public sees them for what they are, rather than what they claim to be. In these cases, it is often most effective to completely destroy their reputation before capturing them, otherwise, even if you manage to lock them up in Tartarus for the rest of eternity, you'll never truly be rid of them. Why do you think that is?"

Izuku hummed, "Well, especially if they claim to be doing the wrong things for the right reasons, they'll probably inspire followers. Their influence will still be felt, probably even more keenly since the media might be tempted to make them into a martyr, so then you'll have to deal with an army led by the villain's ideals, not just the villain himself."

Nedzu smiled, "Perfect. I must say that I am ecstatic that the reports of your intelligence were not exaggerated at all! So, now that you know why this skill is necessary, I would like to help you completely destroy your old middle school to help you gain the knowledge and skills you'll need to defeat such villains in the future. And of course the sprinkling of good old fashioned revenge doesn't hurt either."

"Isn't this going a little far?" Izuku asked. "I mean, I get that the way they treated me...wasn't the best...but do they really deserve to have their reputation *destroyed?* " He shrunk down in his chair. "After all, I'm just one quirkless kid. I'm not really worth making a fuss over."

Nedzu nodded, "You *are* worth giving a fuss over, Midoriya, as I'm sure Aizawa and the others have tried to help you realize." He held up his hand when Izuku tried to protest. "And even if you weren't it would still be worth taking them down. Can you think of any reason

why?"

Izuku shook his head. If it wasn't about him, there was no reason to go after the school. They treated the students with wonderful quirks fairly and they might not be a top ranked school, but they weren't a bad one.

Nedzu sighed, "Let me pose a question. If your middle school willfully allowed you to be abused for years because of your lack of quirk, do you think it's possible they have allowed, or will allow, abuse in similar situations? Say a student with an undesirable heteromorphic type quirk, or a weak quirk, or even someone with a more powerful quirk, but one more stereotypically associated with villainy?"

Izuku's eyes widened. He wanted to say no, of course Aldera Junior High wouldn't allow kids like that to be bullied, that he was just different because he was quirkless and that the teachers treated all the quirked students fairly. But… hadn't some of the kids he'd tried to stop Katsuki from bullying fit those descriptions? Hadn't one of them had a rat quirk? Hadn't that other one had a weak quirk that only allowed her to change her eye color? Had the teachers ever stepped in to help them? Izuku had just assumed they hadn't because Katsuki had switched to him, but what if that wasn't the case? How many kids were being hurt right now, just because the school never tried to help them?

"Let's say I agree with you." he said hesitantly, "Wouldn't it be easier to let the police or the parents resolve the issue? Why should I be the one to take them down?"

Nezu smiled, "Because you're a hero."

Izuku's jaw dropped slightly at the warm feeling in his chest. That was what he was training to do, wasn't it? He wanted to be a hero to give hope to the quirkless, but couldn't he be a hero to the weak and abused as well? He looked into Nedzu's eyes and realized the principal knew *exactly* what he was doing when he said that. Didn't make it any less effective, though.

"Fine." Izuku sighed. "I'll learn how to bring them down, but that doesn't mean I'm totally on board with destroying them yet."

Nedzu nodded, "I don't expect you to be, as long as you promise you'll think about it. For now, we'll stay at the level of the hypothetical. I'll teach you different methods we could use to systematically destroy their reputation, but it will be up to you if you decide to put them into

practice or not. How does that sound?"

Izuku nodded and picked up his tea, "I think that'll be ok. It'll be useful to know either way, right? For the future?"

Nedzu smiled, "Extremely. Remember, Midoriya, that some villain fights aren't fought on the streets or even in dusty warehouse bases. Some villain fights take place in the front pages of newspapers or in the back pages of hero forums. These are the fights that matter most, though, because these are the battles for the hearts and minds of the people." He took a sip of his tea. "Which is arguably even higher stakes than even their lives."

"Does that mean that there are some villains who aren't seen as such?" Izuku asked curiously. "Are there some people who have managed to completely turn public opinion in their favor so that the people don't even realize the crimes they're guilty of?"

Nedzu looked at him proudly, "Yes, Midoriya. It's a part of our job as heroes to be on the lookout even for those invisible villains. They are much more difficult to take down than the stereotypical villains you see on the news," his smile grew, "but that just makes it so much more fun!"

Izuku chuckled and stood, "Thanks for having me, Nedzu! See you tomorrow."

Nedzu nodded and stood to show him out, "Perfect, Midoriya! I'll gather the documents we'll need to begin. Who knows, maybe I'll even be able to rope Detective Tsukauchi into this!"

Izuku rolled his eyes, "I think the detective is busy enough as it is. Have a good day!"

Nedzu smiled and waved as Izuku ran down the hall to get to his next class, then closed the door so he could start working on his plans for their next lesson.

Fight!

Chapter Summary

Alarms and a joint training with 1B.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Izuku had decided he didn't really do well in crowds. It was one thing if he was just another person elbowing for room in front of a hero fight, but it seemed to be another entirely when dozens of eyes were trained on him, all waiting for some sort of eloquent response.

"What's it like having All Might as a teacher?"

Ok, yeah, he totally got why Eraser called them vultures, now. He didn't even like All Might that much, but he couldn't say that because then everyone would hate him because who doesn't like All Might and, oh, he just should have stayed home today.

"Umm…" he managed finally, "it's fine…."

The reporter in front of him huffed in frustration at his non-answer and tossed her ponytail over her shoulder, "Then maybe you can help us with some other rumors we've been hearing. You're a hero course student, right?"

"Yes…"

The reporter got a wicked gleam in her eye that made Izuku take an involuntary step back, "Is it true that there was a quirkless student admitted to the hero course this year?"

Izuku's eyes widened. How did they know that? Were the admissions records public? They couldn't be, right? Then how did they know that there was a quirkless student in the hero course? Did one of his friends blab? One of his classmates? One of his teachers? Did they know they were talking to the quirkless student or was this just a terribly unlucky coincidence? What if…

"Aren't these uniforms *tres chique* ?"

Izuku whipped his head around to see Aoyama practically posing for

the media, something that the photographers were eating up. The reporter glanced at Izuku before shoving her mic into the face of a much more willing victim.

“What’s it like having All Might as a teacher?”

“Well, I’d say it’s absolutely spectacular.” Aoyama gave a dazzling smile and Izuku wondered if his belly button laser could give sparkle to other parts of his body? Would it be possible for him to learn to shoot lasers from his teeth or eyes? “He’s such a beautiful hero. A bit too muscley in my humble opinion, but that is an unfortunate side effect of strength quirks, isn’t it?” He gave a tinkling laugh and Izuku took the opportunity to run past the UA gates. Aoyama caught his eye and winked as he passed him before turning back and continuing to answer the media’s questions like it was what he’d been born to do.

Once Izuku got inside the school, he stopped running and sighed. Yeah, maybe it was a good thing he didn’t get a quirk. He didn’t think he’d be able to handle being a daylight hero, and he probably wouldn’t have even realized underground was an option if he’d gotten an amazing quirk like All Might’s. Or All Might’s quirk. He shook his head. Hopefully Toogata was really good at interacting with the media.

Morning classes weren’t that interesting, just picking a student rep, which Izuku wasn’t interested in at all, especially not after trying to talk to the media this morning, but he did have a productive lesson with Nedzu about identifying weak points in public opinion, which was fun. Katsuki stayed away from him, ignoring him for the most part while glaring straight ahead, which Izuku could deal with much easier than him coming after him palms blazing like he had the first day. He still seemed angry, but Izuku figured that he’d only had one or two therapy visits by now, so he probably couldn’t expect any meaningful changes yet.

Before Izuku knew it, it was time for lunch again. Iida, Uraraka, and Yaoyorozu still insisted on joining him, which confused Izuku to no end, but he wasn’t complaining. Yaoyorozu also usually dragged Todoroki along with her, but he didn’t seem to care where he sat either way, so they tried to include him in their conversations as much as they could. His one word answers ranged from polite to hilariously wrong, but Izuku hadn’t gotten up the courage to laugh at him yet, not when Todoroki was powerful enough to destroy him with just a thought, but he figured that if things kept going the way they were, he might be able to tentatively call Todoroki a friend somewhere in the

middle of their second year.

They were just congratulating Yaoyorozu on her win as student rep when an alarm went off.

“Level three security breach. All students please exit the building in an orderly fashion.”

Izuku looked at the others in confusion, “What’s a level three security breach?”

Uraraka shrugged and the others didn’t seem to know either. A student who was eating at the table next to them had apparently overhead their question and turned to them, “It means somebody managed to get inside the gates. I’ve been here three years and this is the first time it’s happened!”

They hurried to the doors, only to get caught in a bottleneck at the entrance to the cafeteria.

“I’m getting crushed!” Uraraka shouted.

“Hold onto each other!” Yaoyorozu tried to grab at the others, but a massive wave passed through the crowd and they got separated. Izuku tried to keep sight of the others, but all his energy was going into not being trampled and making sure he didn’t trip. He was starting to panic, but the other bodies just kept pushing and trying to get out, so it wasn’t like he could actually do anything besides maybe not die.

All of a sudden Iida slammed into the wall above the door hard enough that everyone stopped moving.

“It’s ok! It’s just the media outside. There is no reason to panic. Please move more slowly so no one gets hurt!”

Izuku smiled. Iida seemed like a natural born leader, even if he was a little more uptight than his brother. The crowd started moving more carefully, at a crawl instead of the frantic push that was happening before. Kirishima and Kaminari reached up to grab Iida when they reached him and he didn’t start floating again, so Izuku figured Uraraka must have returned his gravity.

They all gathered outside on the lawn and the class reps made sure everyone was accounted for as the students watched the media get escorted from the premises. Kaminari and Ashido decided to make a game out of it, rating each reporter on how much they resisted and

how unrepentant they seemed, yelling it out and commentating it like a sports match. Izuku had the distinct feeling that if there had been popcorn available, the two would have been pelting it at the poor guys.

Aizawa came over shortly after the media was cleared off, his expression the weird mix of exhaustion and annoyance that Izuku knew meant that he was losing patience with human stupidity and that all he wanted to do was sleep, cuddle with a cat, or possibly both. Sometimes even coffee wasn't enough to get him out of one of these moods.

" Yo Aizawa!" Kaminari yelled. "Is school canceled the rest of the day because of the break in?"

Aizawa sighed heavily, "No. Because we have already managed the threat, we'll be holding afternoon classes as normal. Go get your gym clothes on and meet back out here, we'll be doing joint training with class 1B."

The class hurried to obey and by the time they got back out to the field, the rest of the school had gone back to class just leaving them and the students of class 1B. They were all huddled together sitting on the grass as Vlad King talked to Aizawa. So far, none of them had come over to talk to class 1A, and no one from 1A had gone over to talk to them. As Izuku tried to figure out their quirks, he wondered if it was normal to have joint training this early in the year. Wouldn't they normally keep the classes apart until their skills were more developed? But, then again, it was probably better to have them together as much as possible to develop camaraderie and to prevent artificial divisions from forming between them…

"Shut up, Deku! You're muttering again!"

Izuku flinched at Katsuki's glare, but he just huffed and turned away rather than coming after him. Maybe the therapy *was* starting to kick in? Or maybe he was just being careful not to do anything overtly violent in front of the teachers since he was on thin ice right now?

"All right everyone." Aizawa activated his quirk to make sure he had all the quirked student's attention. "This training is mostly so you get training going against a wide variety of quirks early on. You'll be doing one on battles where you can pin, immobilize, or knock out your opponent. No support items allowed unless they are required for you to safely use your quirk."

He pulled out his sleeping bag and fell asleep on the grass as Vlad King nodded, “The way this is going to work is through a series of challenges. First, someone from 1A will challenge someone from 1B, then that person will challenge someone from 1A, who will challenge someone from 1B and you get the idea. The class rep of 1A will start us off.”

Izuku wished he had a notebook as he watched the fights. Class B had such cool quirks and it was interesting to see how the students tried to counter each other, especially since most hadn’t had much training in one on one combat and it was infinitely different than fighting robots. Izuku already had a lot of ideas for how everyone could improve and use their quirks more effectively, and they weren’t even halfway through the students!

Todoroki had just gotten called up when Izuku heard a groan from among the class B students.

“Ugh, I wanted to challenge him, all the others are going to be boring.”

Izuku turned slightly to see a blond boy glaring at Todoroki.

“Why did you want to fight *him* so bad?” A girl with red hair asked. “He looks pretty powerful, Monoma.”

“That’s the point, Kendo.” Monoma said. “And it’s not so much that I wanted to fight him in particular, but I didn’t see him at the exam, which means that he’s a recommendation student, which means he has a powerful quirk that I can copy. The more powerful my opponent is, the more powerful I am, it’s as simple as that.”

Izuku perked up, a copy quirk? How did it work exactly? Did Monoma have to know what their quirk was in order to copy it? Did he automatically have mastery of the quirk he’d copied? Could the person still use their quirk while it was copied or was it more like their quirk had been stolen? Could he copy multiple quirks at once? Izuku had so many questions.

“Actually, 1A has three recommendation students this year.” Izuku recognized the girl as the one with the lizard tail quirk from the recommendation exam.

“What?” Monoma asked. “Does 1A really think they’re that much better than us? Why do they get an extra recommendation student?”

“Yeah Setsuna,” Kendo said, “it seems kinda weird. I thought there were always four reccommendation students.”

Setsuna shrugged, “I mean, yeah, usually. They didn’t really tell us why there was an extra student this year, just that there was. Don’t look, but the extra recommendation student is that kid with curly green hair and freckles.”

Izuku pretended to be very busy watching the matches as the other students glanced in his direction. Maybe he shouldn’t be eavesdropping, but it was kinda impossible not to since they were talking about him, Plus Izuku wanted to learn more about Monoma’s quirk.

“Him?” Monoma said incredulously. “He doesn’t look like much.”

“Keep your voice down!” Setsuna hissed. “And besides, looks don’t always equal power. He almost won a race against someone with a speed quirk. Only lost by a few seconds.”

“Hmm,” Izuku could feel Monoma’s eyes on him as Todoroki challenged his next opponent. “What’s his quirk.”

“He never really said.” Setsuna said. “But I think it’s some kind of enhanced agility. Either that or something that affects his intelligence. He completely destroyed the obstacle course.”

Izuku felt a mix of pride and mortification. On the one hand, it felt good to have others recognize how well he’d done at the entrance exam, but on the other, they still didn’t know he was quirkless, so they’d probably change their tune pretty quickly once they figured it out. He shook his head and went back to watching the battles. Eventually, Monoma got challenged by Tokoyami and Izuku leaned forward in anticipation. This would be the perfect chance to see his copy quirk in action and maybe even answer some of his questions about it.

As soon as Vlad King said go, Monoma ran at Tokoyami, but was blocked by Dark Shadow, who tried to grab him. Monoma dodged at the last minute and ran at Tokoyami again. The fight went on like that for a few minutes, with Monoma gradually getting closer to Tokoyami, who didn’t seem to notice. Suddenly, rather than dodging to the side like he had been doing, Monoma ducked under Dark Shadow and grabbed Tokoyami’s ankle before jumping back as a dark blue bird burst from his chest and flapped wildly.

Izuku's face lit up. So Monoma's quirk was activated through physical touch, most likely skin to skin, since he'd grabbed at the sliver of exposed skin on Tokoyami's ankle rather than anywhere else, and he hadn't seemed to be able to copy the quirk by touching Dark Shadow. Monoma's Shadow was still flapping wildly and throwing him off balance as the rest of the students watched in shock.

"Stupid bird." Monoma growled. "Why won't you do what I want?"

So his quirk didn't grant him automatic mastery of any quirk he copied. Nice to know, though Izuku figured that'd make it kinda difficult to use it in combat. Maybe there was a way to store quirks for later use so he could learn to use them? The fight didn't last much longer since Tokoyami took advantage of Monoma's distraction to have Dark Shadow immobilize him.

Vlad King called the match and Dark Shadow let go of Monoma, who was growing increasingly frantic as his Shadow started trying to claw at anyone close enough, including Monoma himself. There was a groan as Aizawa sat up and glared at Monoma with his quirk, making the Shadow disappear as Monoma sighed in relief. Aizawa just rolled his eyes and layed back down, except now Izuku was starting to doubt he was actually asleep. Pretending to be asleep just to spy on his students totally seemed like something he'd do, actually, now that Izuku was thinking about it.

"You fought admirably." Tokoyami said. "Dark Shadow is notoriously difficult to tame."

"Whatever." Monoma scoffed. "Just because you can't control it doesn't mean I can't."

"But you couldn't control it." Tsu said helpfully.

Monoma opened his mouth to offer a scathing reply, but Vlad King cut him off before he could, "Alright, Monoma. It's your turn to pick your opponent."

"Oh, that's easy." Monoma laughed haughtily and pointed at Izuku. "I pick him."

Izuku's eyes widened in shock and he pointed to himself, "Me?"

Monoma rolled his eyes, "Nice to know even the recommendation students in 1A are idiots."

Oh, Izuku grimaced as he stood, Monoma probably thought he had a powerful quirk just because he got in on recommendations. This wasn't gonna end well. He stood up slowly and walked over to Monoma. He should probably tell him, right? At least give him a chance to actually use his quirk in the fight.

"Hey, um, you might wanna copy one of your classmates quirks before the fight." He said softly as soon as he was close enough, "I won't be mad or accuse you of cheating or anything."

Monoma glared at him, "What? You don't think I'm good enough to control your *awesome* quirk? You think you're better than me?"

Izuku's jaw dropped, it was like he was talking to Katsuki.

"No, um, I'm trying to help you."

Monoma chuckled, "I don't need help to beat you. I'll win fair and square."

Izuku sighed. He tried, but if Monoma really was like Katsuki, he probably wouldn't listen to a word of what Izuku said, even if he straight up told him he was quirkless. Izuku glanced over at Aizawa, who had actually woken up to watch Izuku's fight, and he smiled slightly. Well, if Monoma was going to be stubborn about it, he may as well use his opponent's ignorance to his advantage.

"Your student just made a huge mistake." Aizawa cracked his neck as he stood beside Vlad King and watched Deku talk to Monoma.

"What do you mean?" Vlad King asked.

"Well, your student can copy the quirk of anyone he touches, right?"

Vlad nodded.

"Well, I'm guessing he challenged Deku because he's a recommendation student. He probably assumes he's got a powerful quirk like Yaoyorozu and Todoroki."

Vlad's eyes widened, "But Deku's quirkless."

Aizawa nodded with a smile, "Your student's about to learn an important lesson about making assumptions.

Vlad sighed as the two students prepared to square off, "Normally, it

wouldn't be a terrible assumption. You have to admit, Deku is an exception, not the rule."

Aizawa grinned, "He'll still win."

Vlad gave the signal and Monoma ran at Deku, just like he'd run at Tokoyami, but this time, there wasn't a Dark Shadow to block him and Monoma slapped Deku on the arm.

"Ha! Even knowing how my quirk works, you still left yourself wide open...wait, what the…"

Deku smiled and swept Monoma's legs out from underneath him before he could get his bearings, pinning him to the ground.

"You're *Quirkless?!"* Monema screamed as Deku pressed his face into the dirt.

"I warned you that you might want to copy someone else's quirk." Deku said with a smile.

"Deku wins." Aizawa said, hiding his proud smile under his capture weapon. "Let Monoma up and choose your next opponent."

"How did a weak quirkless kid even get into UA?" Monoma yelled.

Aizawa was about to send him to the principal when Todoroki stepped in.

"Didn't that quirkless kid just beat you?"

All of 1A and some of 1B started snickering as Monoma's face turned bright red.

"The fact that he's quirkless only makes his accomplishments more impressive." Yaoyorozu said. "He earned his place at UA, same as the rest of us."

Aizawa noticed that Deku was starting to blush from the praise and figured he should probably save the kid from further embarrassment, "I don't think I need to remind anyone here that bullying of fellow students will not be tolerated, nor will disrimination of any kind. You're trying to be heroes, so attitudes like that will only hurt you in the future, not to mention the inexcusable damage you will do to others." So he was still a little bitter about All Might, sue him. Shouta was just grateful that it was All Might's day off so he didn't have to

see the guy or worry about keeping him away from Deku.

Monoma glared at Deku as he sat down, and some of the other 1B students looked skeptical, but he figured they'd get over it when they saw what Deku was capable of.

"Alright problem child, stop wasting time and choose your opponent."

Aizawa shook his head and retreated back into his sleeping bag as Deku soundly beat his second opponent and the class cheered. That kid was gonna go far.

Chapter End Notes

> Did I write this chapter partially as an excuse for Izuku and Monoma to fight?
> Why yes, yes I did.

The USJ

Chapter Summary

The attack on the USJ begins!

Chapter Notes

Before we get into the chapter I have an announcement. While I have absolutely adored my current update schedule, due to these pesky little things called school and midterms, I am going to have to slow down for a while. This means that rather than getting a chapter every two days, you can expect updates about every four days. While I could probably apologize for this, I'm not going to because it's the right decision for my self care.
As always, you guys are amazing, and enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Uraraka patted Iida on the back as he whined about the bus's open layout. Izuku shook his head, hopefully Iida would calm down a little as time went on. Izuku thought it'd be very stressful to be so uptight when most of the other students were so lax, but then again, he'd insisted on being a hero for years even when everyone around told him to give up, so he didn't really have room to talk.

"Hey Midoriya," Asui said, "did you really work with pro heroes before coming to UA?"

"Umm, yeah." Izuku smiled sheepishly, "But, um, it really wasn't intentional. I just kinda reached out to give them quirk analyses, and it grew from there....yeah."

"That's so manly!" Kirishima said. "But why did you decide to be a hero rather than just being support?"

"Yeah," Kaminari said, "doesn't seem to make much sense cause you're…"

Jiro hit him in the eye with one of her jacks, "Don't pay any attention to him, Midioriya, you don't have to explain yourself if you don't want to."

"But it is kinda a question." Kirishima said. "Even those of us with quirks might not make it. Take me for example, my quirk's strong and

good in a fight, but it's not flashy at all, so I'll probably never be very popular."

"Well, I'm not trying to be popular." Izuku said quickly. "And besides, I think your quirk looks really cool!"

"You think so?" Kirishima grinned. "Sure seems like it'd be easier if I had a flashier quirk."

"Like mine you mean?" Aoyama sparkled as he struck a pose and Izuku vibrated in excitement as he realized that passive sparkle probably was really part of his quirk. Did Aoyama realize he was doing that? The sparkle dimmed slightly when Ashido mentioned his quirks drawback, did that mean that aspect of his quirk was linked to his emotions? What emotions would make the sparkle brighter? Happiness? Or could fear potentially do the same thing?

Katsuki pouted in the back of the bus. Seriously, why was there always so much fuss over Deku? Hadn't he always been useless? He didn't even have a quirk, much less a flashy quirk perfect for being a hero like Katsuki. All he had was way too much stubbornness for his own good.

"Well," Kirishima sighed, "if any of our classmates have pro quirks, it's Todoroki and Bakugo."

"Yeah," Tsu said, "but Bakugo will never be popular with his temper."

Katsuki was about to blow up at her, show her what a temper *really* looked like, but stopped. Aizawa was sleeping at the front of the bus, but there was no guarantee he wouldn't wake up if Katsuki exploded. But what had Hound Dog said? He was allowed to be a jerk, but couldn't hurt people? Something like that? Why did this have to be so complicated?

"Shut up frog-face!" There, that wouldn't get him in trouble, would it?

"Yeah, Bakugo." Kaminari laughed. "We've only known you a few days, but we already know your personality is a flaming pile of garbage."

Katsuki grit his teeth and jumped to his feet. So much for not being hurtful, this idiot had to know his place! "I'll kick your ass, you idiot loser. You're going to regret ever applying to UA!"

"Bakugo…" Aizawa said warningly and Katsuki huffed, sitting back

down. Whatever, these idiots were just obstacles in his path anyway.

Izuku stared at the exchange with wide eyes. There was something different about Katsuki. Yeah, he'd blown up at Kaminari, but, while he'd been rude to Asui, he was much tamer than Izuku had ever seen him. It was almost as if he'd been trying to hold himself back...or maybe it was just because Asui was a girl? That'd make sense, but Izuku didn't think he'd ever seen Katsuki hold back before, regardless of who his target was. What was going on with the world? Katsuki was getting teased and holding himself back while Izuku was getting praised. Had he been dropped in some sort of alternate universe by accident where nothing worked like it was supposed to?

The bus slowed to a stop in front of a giant training facility and the class piled out to see Thirteen standing on the steps and Izuku grinned widely. Thirteen was one of the heroes he'd never had the chance to work with, since they were a rescue hero and didn't need his analysis.

"Oh my goodness!" Uraraka squealed. "Thirteen is one of my favorite heroes! Do you think they'd give me an autograph if I asked?"

"Hello students!" Thirteen gestured for the students to follow them inside. "I created this training facility to help you deal with different types of disasters, you can call it the USJ, or the Unforeseen Simulation Joint."

"Hey, shouldn't All Might be here already?" Aizawa slouched lazily as he walked up to Thirteen, who pulled him to the side and said something Izuku couldn't hear while raising three fingers. Izuku felt his heart sink, he'd thought there were too many articles on All Might this morning. He knew he couldn't tell All Might to just not save people, but he also had a responsibility as a teacher, didn't he?

Aizawa sighed loudly, "We should just get started."

"Excellent!" Thirteen sounded like they were smiling. "Before we begin, I'm sure you're aware I have a powerful quirk, Black Hole, that can suck up anything and turn it to dust. I use it to save people from all kinds of disasters, but it could just as easily be used to kill. With all the regulations on quirks in our superhuman society, we often forget how deadly they can be, so make sure you keep in mind not only the good you can do, but also the harm if you aren't paying enough attention or make a wrong move. But today, you'll be learning to use your quirks to help people, because that's what being a hero is all

about!”

“Alright, settle down.” Aizawa’s tired voice cut through the class’s applause. “Now that that’s over…”

The class gasped as the lights went out and the fountain started to malfunction as a dark purple mist gathered in front of it. Izuku’s eyes widened as he noticed a pair of yellow eyes and far too many hands emerging from the mist.

“Stay together and don’t move.” Aizawa ordered. “Thirteen, protect the students.”

“What is that thing?” Kirishima asked.

“It looks like some sort of warp quirk.” Izuku made sure his muttering was loud enough for Aizawa to hear. “It doesn’t appear to have any limit on space and from here it’s impossible to tell if it has limits on distance, but I don’t think it does or else villains would have to infiltrate inside UA’s walls first and the alarms would have gone off. Speaking of alarms, they’re probably using a quirk to jam the signals and that’s why the lights went off. That person was probably warped over first and could be hiding anywhere.”

Aizawa nodded as he took in the info. Most of the students were still confused and hadn’t quite realized they were under attack yet. There were some whispers that they hadn’t known the training would start quite so soon and wasn’t it supposed to be a rescue training? A few of the braver students tried to step forward, only to stop as Aizawa yelled at them.

“Stay back! Those are villains.”

The class gasped and looked at the intruders with new eyes, but Izuku was already too busy forming his analysis and figuring out weaknesses he and Aizawa could exploit.

“Perplexing.” The mist villain said. “It appears our information was wrong. All Might should be here.”

“So you used the press as a cover and sneaked onto campus.” Aizawa gripped his capture weapon.

“But we went through the trouble of bringing so many friends.” The villain with all the hands seemed to be in charge. “Maybe he’ll show up if we kill a few kids.”

“They chose this isolated facility at a time a class was being taught.” Todoroki said. “They’ve thought this out, so they must have an objective, but what is it?”

“Kaminari.” Aizawa didn’t look away from the villains. “Try contacting the school. Thirteen, get them out of here.”

Izuku ran up to join Aizawa, “I’m coming to fight with you.”

Aizawa glared at him, “No, Deku, it’s too dangerous. You’re leaving and that’s an order.”

“But your fighting style…”

“I said no.”

They glared at each other for a long moment before Izuku huffed and looked away, “Fine, but if you die, I will kill you myself.”

Eraser nodded and lept down the steps, taking down all the villains in his way.

Izuku turned to Thirteen, “We need to get out of here. Is there a closer exit?”

When Thirteen shook their head, Izuku cursed and led the class in running toward the doors, but the mist villain cut them off before they could leave.

“Hello, we are league of villains. I know it’s impolite, but we invited ourselves here to say hello. Isn’t this a fitting place for the symbol of peace to die?”

Kirishima and Katsuki didn’t waste any time as they ran at the villain, but when the smoke from Katsuki’s explosion cleared, the villain was still standing tall.

“Hmm, that was close…” he muttered. “You live up to your school’s reputation.”

“The mist villain has a weakness.” Izuku muttered. “His real body is protected by metal plating.”

“You two, out of the way right now!” Thirteen yelled, but it was too late. The mist villain had already surrounded them with tendrils of dark smoke, then Izuku was falling. He just barely had time to take a deep breath before he plunged deep into the rescue pool. He

immediately started swimming upward, but his eyes widened when he saw a shark swimming toward him and he froze. There wasn't anything he could do. He wasn't used to fighting in water and he was starting to run out of air. Izuku flinched as the shark opened his jaw, but then Asui managed to kick the villain in the face and wrap her tongue around Izuku. She was already holding Mineta under one arm.

She tossed Izuku up to the deck of the ship wreck, then tossed Mineta up a few seconds later, much less gently. Izuku shook his head, it wouldn't surprise him if Mineta had managed to say something inappropriate even in a life threatening situation. It was only the first week of school and Izuku had already noticed all the girls hated him. Hopefully being around the strong women of the hero course would teach him a little respect.

Asui crawled up the side of the ship and Izuku smiled at her, "Thanks Asui, you saved my life."

"I told you to call me Tsu!" Asui croaked.

As Izuku frantically apologized, Asui looked out at the villains who were gathering in the water, "This is turning out to be a terrible day of class."

"Yeah," Izuku frowned, "I keep thinking about what that villain said. They planned this to kill All Might."

"But that doesn't matter!" Mineta smiled. "As soon as All Might shows up, they're toast!"

"I'm not so sure." Asui said thoughtfully. "If they planned this to kill All Might, they probably have a way to kill him. We should probably focus on not getting tortured to death, though."

"No!" Mineta was starting to panic. "Tell Frog-boobs to shut up!"

Izuku glared at him. Even Katsuki's nicknames weren't that bad, and at least he wouldn't panic and make an already difficult situation worse. Mineta responded by screaming again when he saw how close the villains were getting to the ship.

"There's just one thing that doesn't add up though." Izuku pinched his lower lip in thought. "They sent you here, Asu...I mean Tsu!"

"Why does it matter that she's here!?" Mineta screamed.

Izuku looked at the other two. Mineta was starting to cry, but Asui was looking at him curiously.

Izuku took a deep breath, “It means they don’t know your quirks.”

“You’re right.” Asui pointed at the fire zone. “It would have been better to send me there, but they didn’t.”

Izuku nodded, “Maybe we can use that to our advantage. For all they know, the three of us could be super powerful.”

“But you’re not super powerful!” Mineta yelled. “You’re quirkless! What are you supposed to do?”

Izuku froze. Mineta was right, wasn’t he? What could he do? He was a quick thinker, but how was that going to help here? Was he really useless in this situation?

Asui slapped Mineta over the head with her tongue, “Be quiet. Midoriya has to think if we want to get out of here and he can’t do that if you’re insulting him.”

Mineta opened his mouth to protest, but shut up when Asui slapped him again. Izuku took a deep breath, “Alright, let’s talk quirks. What can you two do?”

“I can jump far, cling to pretty much any wall, and stick out my tongue about twenty meters.” Asui said. “I can also spit out my stomach so I can clean it and secrete a poisonous mucus that just stings a bit.”

Mineta had started drooling when Asui mentioned mucus, but he came back to earth with another slap from Asui.

“These sticky balls on my head pop off and stick to anything, but their strength depends on how I’m feeling that day. They don’t stick to me, though, I just bounce right off them.” He stared at the others for a minute before he started sobbing again. “This is why I told you we should wait for the real heroes! My quirk is useless for combat!”

The boat shuddered as a hard blade of water cut through it, then started to sink.

“I’m starting to get bored!” One of the villains yelled.

Asui looked skeptically at Mineta, who had started screaming again

and was launching his balls at the villains in panic, “Mineta, are you sure the hero thing is right for you?”

“It’s weirder not to be scared right now!” Mineta cried. “I can’t believe I’m gonna die without ever touching Yaoyorozu’s boobs!”

Asui sighed and Izuku looked at the villains, “Wait, they’re afraid to touch them...and they’re sure of their victory, which means they’re bound to make a mistake…”

“What are you talking about?” Mineta sniffed.

Izuku smiled, “I have an idea. Mineta, give me your scarf!”

Asui pulled the scarf off his cape when Mineta hesitated and handed it to Izuku. Izuku pulled out his grappling hook and wrapped the scarf around it, “Alright Mineta, create a chain using your balls and stick it to the scarf. We’re going to shoot out the line with the stick chain attached, then bring it back to capture the villains and stick them to the boat.”

“Hmm,” Asui frowned, “I think it’d be better if I jumped out into the water and swam around the periphery with the chain before shooting the gun at the grip to tighten it. That way we can capture all the villains, not just a few.”

Izuku nodded, “It’ll be dangerous though. Are you sure you can swim faster than they can?”

Asui shrugged, “I can try. And if I can’t, I’ll just shoot the gun back at the boat early and ride it back up.”

Mineta made a chain about the length of the boat, pulling it tight as Asui jumped down into the water and started swimming. Mineta kept adding balls as fast as he could pull them off as Asui swam farther, rocketing past the villains, who were jeering at her for leaving her classmates behind. Most of them were so busy jeering that they didn’t notice the chain, but the ones that did notice just swam a few feet back so they weren’t touching the balls.

When Asui finished her loop around the villains, she shot the hook back at the boat, which tightened the loop suddenly, catching most of the villains by surprise and immobilizing them as they got stuck. Izuku looked out over the water as Asui unwrapped the scarf from around the hook and hopped with it once around the boat to tighten the loop further. There were a few villains who had escaped, but not

enough that they couldn't beat them in shallow water. Asui shoved Mineta unceremoniously under her arm and wrapped her tongue around Izuku, then jumped as far as she could toward the shore. A few villains followed them, but Izuku shot them with rubber bullets before they could get too close.

"Let's get back to the entrance." Asui said. "We can go around so we don't run into the villains Aizawa is facing."

Izuku clenched his fist, "I know how Eraser fights. He won't last much longer against a big group like that and he's just going to get hurt because he was trying to keep us safe. I'm gonna go help him."

Mineta stared at him incredulously, "Are you trying to get us killed or something?"

"I'm not saying we should jump into the middle of the battle or anything." Izuku said. "But maybe we could find a way to pick off some of the weaker ones so Eraser doesn't have to worry about them."

They crouched behind the lip of rock on the shoreline once Izuku promised that they'd run as soon as things got dangerous. Eraser was still doing ok and he still looked as intimidating as ever, but Izuku could tell he was slowing down, panting between villains and letting his hair stay down for a few milliseconds longer between erasures. As Izuku watched, the hand villain rushed him and laid a hand on his elbow right when he blinked. Eraser's elbow began to flake away as the sleeve and skin disintegrated under the villain's touch. A disintegration quirk? Probably five point if the hands were any indication.

Eraser managed to keep fighting, even though his injured arm was flapping uselessly at his side, but the hand villain just laughed, "You really are so cool, Eraserhead! But I'm not the final boss here, Nomu is."

A giant man with a bird beak slammed Eraser into the ground with one punch and broke his already injured arm.

"Eraser!" The hand villain looked over at him and Izuku swallowed as he saw Eraser's panicked expression as he struggled to lift his head up, only to have his face ground into the floor again by the villain. Asui was tugging at his arm, trying to get him to crouch back down, but Izuku didn't even remember standing up.

"Ahh." The hand villain grinned beneath the strange hand mask on his

face. “You must be Deku. Sensei gave me a side quest for you...”

Chapter End Notes

Yes, I googled it and guns can still fire after being submerged. It only really becomes a problem if you're firing them underwater or if they've been underwater for a few hours.

Powerful

Chapter Summary

The conclusion of the USJ incident.

Izuku stared at the hand villain in shock and fear. A side quest? What did that even mean? How did this guy even know who he was?

“I guess I haven’t introduced myself, have I?” The hand villain sauntered closer, “You’re supposed to do that for non-NPC characters. My name is Tomura Shigaraki. You’re pretty famous, Deku, did you know that? All sorts of people are in prison because of you.”

Izuku swallowed hard and looked to where Eraser was lying broken on the ground, still underneath the Nomu. He didn’t know if backup were coming, but there was a good chance All Might was on his way by this point. If Izuku could stall the villains, even temporarily, he might be able to keep them from hurting Eraser even more.

He gave Shigaraki a shaky smile and stepped up into the plaza, “Yep, that’s me.”

Shigaraki grinned, “Sensei says you’re pretty smart.”

“That’s what they keep telling me.” Izuku shrugged. “But I really don’t think I’m anything special.”

Shigaraki scratched at his neck, “That’s not what Sensei says…” he growled.

Izuku froze. Downplaying his intelligence was obviously stressing Shigaraki out, which might make him more likely to attack, “Umm…I mean, I don’t actually know my IQ, so I can’t tell you objectively that I’m actually smarter than anyone else, but if I wasn’t, I probably wouldn’t be at UA so….”

Shigaraki stopped scratching and smiled, “Yeah, that’s what Sensi said. Sensei’s even smarter than you are, Deku…”

The mist villain appeared next to Shigaraki, “My apologies, but despite my best efforts, a student escaped. The heroes are no doubt on their way.”

Shigaraki scratched violently at his neck, “Kurogiri, you idiot! If you

weren't our warp gate, I'd kill you right now."

Izuku tried to calm his breathing and keep his hope in check. Heroes were on the way, but that didn't mean they were out of the woods yet. His best bet was to keep stalling Shigaraki and keep him from doing anything too violent until All Might arrived.

"Maybe we should kill…"

"Shigaraki." Izuku said loudly. "You said something about a quest for me. I'm sure your sensei wouldn't be too happy if you didn't let me know about it."

"Ahh, yes!" Shigaraki turned to look at him again. "Sensei is so excited to meet you!"

"Who is your Sensei?" Keep him talking....

Shigaraki pointed at the Nomu, "I'm sure you've noticed my Nomu isn't exactly *normal* , right?"

Izuku nodded, keep him talking, "I've noticed he's pretty powerful, and that he seems to obey your orders."

Shigaraki nodded, "He *is* pretty powerful, but Sensei makes him seem like a mid-level boss!" He cackled. "Nomu here has multiple quirks. He's got regeneration, shock absorption, not to mention super strength. The quirks mess with his brain a bit but," he shrugged, "what can you do?"

Izuku's mind spun, he wanted to say it was impossible for someone to have that many quirks, but...Toogata had two quirks, didn't he? If there was a quirk that could be passed down like All Might's, was it possible that there was a quirk that could bestow multiple quirks. Oh, dang, he was probably supposed to respond, wasn't he?

"Umm… how did Nomu get all these quirks?" Izuku did his best to look intrigued, "I'm assuming he wasn't born with them?"

"Nope!" Shigaraki grinned. "That's my Sensei's quirk! He can take quirks from whoever he wants and give them to his loyal followers. That's where you come in, Deku."

Izuku felt slightly nauseous, he hoped he was wrong about where this was going, "Me?"

Shigaraki nodded, “Sensei promised that if you come with us and use that big brain of yours to help the league, he’ll give you a quirk. Wouldn’t it be nice to not be quirkless anymore?”

“Shut up!” Tsu shouted from behind him. “He’s a villain, Midoriya, you can’t believe a word he says.”

Izuku cursed and tried to wave her away. Why were they still there? He had to keep control of the situation. Izuku glanced toward the door. Just keep Shigaraki occupied a little longer, “What kind of quirk are we talking about? I don’t think I’d need an intelligence quirk. Like you mentioned, that’s already in my arsenal. And I’m a decent quirkless fighter. What quirk could Sensei have that could tempt me?”

Shigaraki shrugged, “Any quirk you want. Sensei’s got a lot of options, but I bet that even if you pointed out a random quirk off the street, Sensei would be happy to steal it for you.”

“Don’t listen to him!” Mineta screamed. “What he’s saying is impossible, everyone knows that!”

Shigaraki scowled and started scratching at his neck again and Izuku wished his classmates would stop trying to help, “No, he's not lying." He looked Shigaraki in the eye, "I know that it’s possible.”

Shigaraki smiled, “Then you accept?”

Izuku took a deep breath and hesitated. He could keep playing along and say yes, but he didn’t think it was smart to let the villains think they’d won him over. They might try to kidnap him or even seek him out after this if they thought he was interested in joining up. But All Might was on his way so Izuku wouldn’t have to deal with Shigaraki’s wrath for too long. Hopefully.

“No.” he said finally, “I’ve gotten this far quirkless, and I don’t think I want a quirk anymore.” Izuku clenched his fists. “I don’t need to be powerful to be useful, Shigaraki!”

Shigaraki’s face twisted in rage and he screamed as he ran at Izuku, who rolled to the side just in time, but Shigaraki was already attacking again. Izuku grabbed a handful of dirt and threw it in Shigaraki’s face, scrambling to his feet and grabbing a knife as Shigaraki growled and rubbed his eyes.

“You little brat!” The sand didn’t distract him for as long as Izuku hoped, but this time when Shigaraki ran at him, he was prepared. He

gripped his knife a little harder in preparation for what he was planning and ignored the little voice in his head that screamed he was going too far, that there had to be another way. But Izuku didn't know what else to do. He was outmatched, his opponent was faster and stronger than he was, and five point disintegration quirks needed five points to work.

As soon as Shigaraki reached for him, Izuku pivoted and swung his knife, flinching at the blood as he sliced through the muscle and bone of Shigaraki's left pinky. Izuku almost threw up when he saw that the finger was still hanging on by only a small piece of skin and muscle. He'd done that. He'd hurt him, and likely caused permanent damage just to disable a quirk.

Shigaraki screamed in rage and pain, reaching for Izuku and grabbing his forearm with his uninjured hand. Izuku gasped at the pain as his skin and muscle slowly flaked away. He tried to yank his arm away from Shigaraki's tight grasp, but was unable to until Shigaraki was distracted by a loud bang.

"I am here, to save you!"

There was a rush of wind and Izuku found himself standing outside the USJ with All Might looking down on him with concern, "Are you alright, my boy?"

Izuku nodded, "I'm injured, but fine, go fight the villains, but beware of the Nomu, he's got multiple quirks."

All Might frowned, "You're injured, maybe I should…"

Izuku grit his teeth, "I'll be fine, but the other students are in danger. Save them!"

"But you…"

Izuku hit All Might's chest with his uninjured arm, "They are here to kill *you* , All Might, which you would know if you didn't waste all your time this morning when you were supposed to teach today. Go save the others, they need you just as much as I do."

All Might's face hardened, "The others can take care of themselves."

"No they can't!" Izuku screamed, "They're students, All Might! Now stop wasting what little time you have left and get in there! Leave me and go!"

All Might hesitate another long moment before disappearing back into the facility. Izuku scowled and made his way back into the USJ. He needed to make sure Eraser and the other students were safe.

Ashido and Uraraka were trying to patch up Thirteen when he saw them, and he ran to help Asui and Mineta, who were struggling to carry Aizawa up the stairs as All Might traded blows with the Nomu. They laid him next to Thirteen and Izuku could feel tears welling up as he took in his injured friend.

“Midoriya?” Asui put her hand on his shoulder. “Are you alright?”

Izuku nodded, “I can hardly feel the pain right now, but we need to find the others and get out of here. Hopefully All Might can handle the villains.”

“Umm…” Mineta pointed a shaky finger down at the plaza. “I don’t know if he can.”

Izuku looked to see All Might bleeding from his side and slowly being pulled through a portal after he’d apparently tried to supplex the Nomu. Izuku grimaced and started running back down to the plaza as the others yelled for him to stop. Hopefully Aizawa would forgive him, but the world couldn’t lose it’s symbol of peace yet!

There was an explosion right as he reached the plaza and Izuku stopped as he saw Katsuki pin Kurogiri and Todoroki freeze half the Nomu, allowing All Might to escape as Kirishima ran at Shigaraki, who was still cradling his injured hand, “Kids these days really are amazing. Can’t have that. Nomu!”

The Nomu pulled itself back though the warp gate and tore off it’s frozen limbs, regrowing them in seconds. Izuku nodded, if he’d created something with multiple quirks, regeneration would definitely be one of them. The others, though, were shocked.

“What is this?” All Might was still clutching his side. “I thought you said his quirk was shock absorption?”

Izuku scowled. He’d warned him that Nomu had multiple quirks. Had All Might even listened to him?

“Nomu’s been engineered to take you on even at 100% of your power.” Shigaraki said, gritting his teeth through the pain. “He’s basically a highly efficient punching bag that hits back! First things first, though, we need to free our method of escape. Nomu, get him!”

Izuku gasped as the Nomu ran for Katsuki and a massive cloud of dust billowed from the impact, “Katsuki!”

“I’m right here you idiot!” Katsuki was sitting beside Kirishima dusty and bruised from being tossed, but ok.

“But then…?” Kirishima looked over toward the Nomu, “How’d you get over here?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” Todoroki pointed to where the dust was clearing to reveal All Might, his arms still raised to block the punch.

“These are kids and you didn’t hold back?” Blood was starting to leak from the corner of All Might’s mouth.

“He was pinning my warp gate, so it’s not like I had much choice.” Shigaraki said. “And besides, these kids are no angels.” He held up his mangled hand. “That one even tried to cut my hand apart. What kind of hero does something like that?”

Katsuki looked at Izuku incredulously and he grimaced. Yeah, it really did sound bad when Shigaraki put it like *that*.

All Might cut off Shigaraki’s monologue about heroic violence, “I think you’re just doing whatever you want and trying to hide it behind values.”

Shigaraki chuckled, “You figured me out, huh? Nomu! Kill him!”

Dust filled the plaza as Nomu and All Might started fighting, “If he’s designed to defeat me at 100%,” All Might grit his teeth, “then I’ll just have to go beyond that! Plus Ultra!”

He sent the Nomu flying through the ceiling, then turned to Shigaraki, “I guess I really am getting weaker, that took more than 300 punches!”

Shigaraki was scratching at his neck with his good hand, “Cheater! How did he beat Nomu?”

“What, villain?” All Might looked as powerful as ever, but Izuku could see steam mixed in with the dust. He was out of time. “I thought you were going to kill me?”

Shigaraki screamed and threw himself at All Might and Izuku knew this was how it was going to end. All Might probably couldn’t move or

he'd reveal his true form, and he was probably willing to die to keep that secret, considering how long he'd kept being a hero despite his condition. But if the symbol of peace were to be killed here by villains, crime would sky rocket all over Japan. The world couldn't lose their symbol like this!

Izuku cursed and started running. All Might might not reveal his true form to save himself, but he would to save someone else. And who better than the kid he already thought was weak and defenseless?

"Midoriya, no!" All Might grabbed him and rolled to the side in a puff of steam as Izuku ran into Shigaraki's line of fire. All of a sudden, gunfire rang out and Shigaraki screamed again. Izuku looked to see him disappear into a warp gate right before his view was obscured by one of Cementoss's walls.

All Might glared at him as the steam of his transformation finally cleared, "That was incredibly reckless, young Midoriya."

Izuku met his eyes, "So was letting yourself die just to keep a secret."

All Might's face softened, "I'm just glad you're alright." He put his hand on Izuku's shoulder, "After today, young Midoriya, I hope you've seen how reckless it is for you to be a hero. There's no shame in dropping out of the hero course now that you've seen what real villains are like."

Izuku knocked All Might's hand away and his eyes hardened. Up until this point, Izuku figured he'd kinda been in the denial stage of grief, mourning the loss of the hero he'd grown up admiring. But he'd forgotten that anger was a stage of grief too, and that's all Izuku felt as he looked at a hero who would crush his dream, even after he'd saved his life. Good thing Izuku had new heroes now.

Izuku stood and started stalking back toward the entrance before stopping and looking back at All Might, who was still standing there, pleading with his eyes for Izuku to just give up and stay safe.

"I already knew what really villains were like, All Might," he said lowly, "but you'd know that if you'd ever bothered to get to know me, rather than deciding I'm weak just because I'm quirkless."

Toshinori watched Midoriya's back as he walked away. What had the boy meant when he said he already knew what villains were like? How had he remained so calm when other students were panicking? Had Midoriya really been the one to cut off Shigaraki's finger? He

couldn’t have. He was quirkless, right? Helpless, just like Toshinori had been before Nana gave him her quirk?

Or was he?

Hospitals and Research

Chapter Summary

> Izuku researches the league of villains while waiting for Eraser to wake up.

Izuku rubbed his eyes as he stared at the screen of his laptop. As tired as he was, he knew he wouldn't be able to sleep until he knew Eraser was alright, and besides, he needed to do something to distract him from his overwhelming anger. He glanced over at his teacher, unconscious on the hospital bed as Joke dozed off in the hard plastic chair pushed against the wall. He should probably offer her the couch, but then he'd have to wake her up and she might not be able to fall asleep again.

Izuku itched at the bandage on his forearm. Recovery Girl had said he was lucky the disintegration hadn't gotten to the bone, so he'd escape with just a scar, but even with her quirk, it would still take a few days to heal completely. He shook his head and picked up his notebook. Information on the villains they'd arrested was easy to find, but that wasn't what Izuku was interested in right now. What he wanted was info on Shigaraki, Kurogiri, and the one they'd called Sensei.

So far, Izuku didn't have much. He knew a lot about Shigaraki's quirk and how it worked, but that was only because he'd seen it in person. Even after Tsukauchi gave him access to the government's quirk files, Izuku couldn't find any record of a person with Shigaraki's quirk. At least, not one that was alive. There had been a woman with a nearly identical quirk, but she'd died nearly 50 years ago.

Kurogiri's quirk was even worse. Izuku only saw Warp Gate being used a few times, so didn't get the chance to really see what weaknesses and limitations it had. Did Kurogiri have to be able to see where he was warping? Did he have to have been there? Was there any limit, however large, to the size of his warp gates? After what he found on Shigaraki's quirk, Izuku broadened his search to any warp quirks recorded since the dawn of quirks on a hunch, just in case Warp Gate wasn't the quirk Kourogiri had been born with but nada. Sure, there were some other warp quirks, but none of those exactly matched what he'd seen. It was so frustrating!

And it all came back to Sensei. Izuku sighed and started combing through online forums, looking for any mention of a man who could

give and take quirks. A couple people mentioned someone called All for One, but they were always shot down pretty quick because All for One was a legend, a boogeyman. He couldn't be a real person.

Could he?

Izuku made a note and decided to look deeper into All for One. There were stories about him going back for years, even centuries. Izuku had originally thought that was because he was a legend created around the dawn of quirks, but if he were real... well, he could be dead, or he could have a longevity quirk, or All for One could be an inheritable quirk like All Might's and the name just fell to whoever had the quirk. There were just too many options.

He decided to start by researching the earliest references first. That way, even if it was a different person with the same quirk or claiming to have that quirk, Izuku would still be able to understand the history. There were lots of stories from around the dawn of quirks, but many of them had to have been exaggerated. It was easy to see where the legends came from. Superpowers had still been so new then that not many people knew how they worked. Being quirkless seemed normal at that point, so some people with quirks didn't want them, but others wanted the power that came with having superhuman abilities. A man who could give and take quirks must have seemed like a miracle worker in that environment.

According to the stories Izuku could find, All for One had created a veritable yakuza with hundreds of loyal followers. There were just as many stories of people saying he "made us gods" as there were saying he "cured us of our mutations" so Izuku figured he had loyalty among both the quirked and quirkless. He also seemed more comfortable in the shadows, letting his lackeys do more and more of the dirty work as he gained more disciples.

Izuku was about to move on from that original All for One when an article caught his eye. It was just a gossip magazine expose on the man behind the quirk and what contributed to his rise to villainy and Izuku almost didn't bother reading it, but the photo printed alongside the article seemed familiar for some reason. Izuku stared at it for a long minute, trying to figure out where he'd seen it before. Oddly enough, it wasn't All for One who seemed familiar, but the young man standing next to him that the caption identified as his quirkless younger brother. Where had Izuku seen him before?

Wait…

Izuku dug through his old files and entered the password to view the encrypted file he'd made on All Might's quirk. He'd hit a dead end when researching because one of the holders had a quirkless mentor but… He clicked on an image of the first holder smiling alongside his serious mentor then looked back at the photo included with the article and...yep, it was the same guy. But All for One's brother had mentored a man to be a hero and started a whole line of heroes, so shouldn't All for One have been a hero too? Or maybe his brother should have been a villain? Maybe…

Izuku cried out as Joke grabbed his laptop off his lap, "Alright kiddo, you've been sitting there since the doctors let us in. You need to sleep!"

"But," Izuku reached for his laptop, but Joke held it out of reach.

"No." She shook her head. "What you need to do is save your work and close your eyes for a while, even if you can't sleep. Don't forget you were injured too, or would you like me to get Recovery Girl over here to wack you over the head with her stick?"

Izuku sighed, "Fine, but if I can't sleep after a half hour, I go back to my research, ok?"

Joke smiled and gave him back the laptop. Izuku saved his work, encrypting his All for One file just like he'd done with his research on All Might's quirk before setting it down on the floor next to him. Joke handed him a blanket and ruffled his hair, making Izuku roll his eyes. Izuku knew he wouldn't be able to sleep, but laid down and closed his eyes anyway to make Joke think he was at least trying.

Apparently he was more tired than he thought, though, because he was out almost immediately.

Shouta groaned as he opened his eyes only to find that he couldn't really see. He tried to move his hands to see if there was something covering his eyes, but they hurt and felt like they were tied to his chest. What was going on? Was there really something covering his face or was he blind now? He started hyperventilating as the memories started filtering in. The attack on the USJ. Shigaraki. Nomu. Deku! Where was Deku? Was he ok?

"Eraser? Crap! Shouta, breathe with me! You're ok, you're at the hospital, you're safe!"

Shouta found himself melting with relief at Fukukado's voice and he tried to match her breathing. He was safe. He was in the hospital. Ok, but, "Deku. Is he ok? The last thing I remember, he was facing down the villains."

Fukukado chuckled, "See for yourself."

Shouta frowned, "...my eyes…"

"Oh, crap! Sorry!" Shouta felt hands brush gently against his face and then he was looking at Fukukado's face as she pulled the bandages out of the way. "The doctor says your orbital floor was damaged, so you should probably rest your eyes as much as you can. I just didn't think about how freaked out you'd be waking up and not being able to see anything. I'm sorry Eraser."

Shouta tried to nod, but stopped when the movement sent a jolt of pain through his neck, "Deku? Is he alright?"

Fukukado rolled her eyes and stepped to the side slightly, letting Shouta see Deku passed out on the couch, notebooks and loose papers crumpled around him as his laptop sat on the floor next to him.

"He's been researching the league of villains ever since Recovery Girl healed him, trying to track them down." Fukukado sighed. "I forced him to go to sleep about an hour ago, but I can wake him up if you want to talk to him."

Shouta wanted to shake his head, but figured that'd go about as well as nodding so he didn't, "No, let him sleep. He must be exhausted, especially if Recovery Girl healed him. Has he found anything yet?"

Fukukado shrugged, "I don't really know. He was kinda ignoring the world, honestly, and was muttering so fast I didn't catch all of it. He said All Might a few times and something about the dawn of quirks, but I really don't know." She grabbed a plastic chair from against the wall and sat on it backward, so her folded arms were draped on the back of the chair and she was facing him. "Honestly, I'm fairly certain at this point he was just trying to channel his anger…"

Shouta sighed, "Yeah, I'm pretty angry at those villains too."

Fukukado gave him an unreadable expression, "That's not...I mean, yeah, he's angry at them too, but…"

"What?"

Fukukado sighed, “He won’t talk about it, but apparently All Might cornered him after the attack. Told him to give up being a hero.”

“That no good son a…”

“Ahh, don’t get up Eraser!” Fukukado pushed him gently back into the bed. “Don’t worry, we’ve already sicced Nighteye on him, but he was in pretty bad shape too from what Recovery Girl said, so it might be a bit before he’s allowed to have visitors.” She gave him a look. “And those visitors won’t be allowed to kill him.”

Shouta huffed, “I don’t think I’m in any condition to kill anyone...at least not right now.”

Fukukado laughed, then looked at him softly, “We were really worried about you, you know?”

Shouto looked down at the bed, “Yeah. It was just...so scary. I thought I was going to lose them, Joke. I...they outright said they were going to kill the students a few times and I...I tried so hard to protect them and then Deku was facing down Shigaraki and I… I couldn’t do anything. I was pinned and I...I just felt so hopeless.”

Shouta knew he sounded broken, so he couldn’t bring himself to look at Fukukado until she rested her hand gently on his knee. She smiled at him softly, but her eyes were wet with tears, “I know, Shouta. I can’t even imagine how scared you must have been for your students. But you fought anyway, and none of your students had major injuries. You did good.”

Shouta frowned, “It doesn’t feel like it.”

Fukukado sighed, “No. No, it doesn’t.”

What Friends Do?

Chapter Summary

Nighteye visits All Might in the hospital

“What were you thinking?”

Toshinori winced as Nighteye threw open the door to his hospital room, “Hello to you too, Mirai. Aren’t you at least glad I survived the fight with that monster?”

He devolved into a coughing fit and Mirai frowned at him. He looked conflicted for a long moment before he sighed and sat down in the chair beside the bed.

“Here.” Mirai handed him a handkerchief. “Don’t hurt yourself.”

Toshinori took the handkerchief and gave Mirai a weak smile, “We did it though, Mirai. We changed the future. I didn’t die by the hand of a monster like you foresaw.”

Mirai sighed, “We don’t *know* that, Toshinori. You know as well as I do that the surroundings get more and more fuzzy the farther into the future I look, so there’s no guarantee this Nomu was the monster I saw at your death.”

Toshinori coughed again, “Can’t you just take a moment to be happy I’m alive?”

Mirai raised an eyebrow at him, “You’ve been asleep for most of the past 24 hours. How do you know I haven’t already taken that moment and moved on?”

Toshinori laughed, but stopped when he realized how badly his ribs hurt, “Good point. I assume that you’re here to chew me out for being reckless? If so, you’re a little late, Recovery Girl already gave me an earful.” He rubbed the back of his head, still feeling the phantom pain from her cane. “And a headful.”

Mirai glared at him, “You deserved it. You should have been there, Toshinori. Those students were counting on you, and you failed them because you were late.”

Toshinori sighed, “I know. I should have prioritized my teaching

rather than my heroics, but…" he groaned. "How was I supposed to just walk by when people needed my help?"

"By knowing your limits." Mirai said. "You got lucky with One for All in that you've basically had enough power to do whatever you put your mind to your entire career, but most people aren't that lucky. Most of us have to know our limits and do what we can within them, but that doesn't make us any less."

Toshinori frowned, "You're talking about young Midoriya, aren't you?"

"I don't understand it, Toshinori! You were quirkless! You know firsthand how difficult that is and yet you still tried to get him to drop out of the hero course!"

Toshinori grimaced, "He told you about that, huh?"

Mirai huffed, "Why wouldn't he? He was pretty angry, Toshinori. And from what I heard from Eraser, this wasn't even the first time you've tried to crush his dream. I'm not sure if he'll ever forgive you. I don't even know if *I* can forgive you."

Toshinori frowned in confusion, "What? Why wouldn't you be able to forgive me? Are you close to young Midoriya or something?"

Mirai raised his eyebrows, "Midoriya is Deku, the analyst who has been helping the hero underground for the last year or so. I'm surprised you didn't know that, it's not like we were trying to hide his identity or anything, Eraser says that even the students know at this point. Were you even paying attention, Toshinori"

"Young Midoriya is *that* Deku? I thought he had an analysis quirk!" Toshinori said in shock.

"Of course you did." Mirai muttered. "How many Dekus did you think existed, Toshinori? *Useless* isn't a very common code name."

"I just thought it was the two of them. I didn't think..." Toshinori muttered.

"There's just the one Deku, Toshinori." Mirai glared at him. "So I'm sure you can understand why I'd be angry with you right now. I've grown close to Deku and can vouch for his skill, but from what I've been told you've been against him from the very beginning."

“I was just trying to protect him!”

“By what?” Mirai asked. “By treating him like he’s less than the other students?”

“No! I wanted to protect him by keeping him alive! You’ve never been quirkless before, Mirai, you don’t know what it’s like.”

“And now I’m questioning whether you do.” Mirai said, meeting Toshinori’s eye. “Nana gave you that quirk decades ago, Toshinori, so how much do you really remember about being quirkless.”

Toshinori held his gaze without flinching, “Enough to remember that I would never have been able to be a hero if she hadn’t.”

“So that’s what this about then.” Mirai glared at him. “You think there’s no way Deku is capable of being a quirkless hero just because you weren’t. Think, Toshinori! Think of how you would have felt if people back then told you that there was no way you could be a hero, just because you were quirkless.”

“You seem to be forgetting that people *did* tell me that.” Toshinori said. “Multiple times, in fact, for years. I never could have achieved my dreams of being a symbol of peace if I hadn’t met Nana when I did. And you’re right! I did get lucky, but that doesn’t change the fact that someone without a quirk can never stand against someone with superpowers! I’ll admit I did not realize the extent of what young Midoriya was capable of, but I was just trying to…”

Mirai held up a hand, “It doesn’t matter what you were trying to do, Toshinori. In the end, you made him feel as if he were less than the other students.” Mirai glared at him. “The exact opposite of what a good teacher is supposed to do. I’m disappointed in you, Toshinori.”

Toshinori felt like he’d gotten a punch in the gut. What was he supposed to say to *that*? He’d just thought…but then young Midoriya *had* survived the attack, hadn’t he? He’d even been facing down the villains when Toshinori had arrived. The silence dragged on to the point where it was beyond awkward, but he still didn’t know what he was supposed to say. He didn’t want to lose his friend again, not when Mirai had just barely started speaking to him again. But what was he supposed to do?

After a few minutes, Mirai stood, “I think that you’re going to have to accept that Deku is going to be the quirkless hero that you weren’t capable of being. He might never be a symbol of peace like you are,

and he'll have to know his limits, like you seem to be incapable of doing, but he *is* going to be a hero, and you're just going to have to deal with that." He sighed and turned back to Toshinori with his hand on the doorknob. "Just...promise me you'll give him a chance, ok? If not for his own sake, for the sake of that quirkless boy you once were, the one everyone told he couldn't be a hero. Because I think you'll find you two are much more similar than you realize."

Toshinori stared at Mirai for a long moment before nodding hesitantly. Mirai gave him a small smile and walked out the door, leaving Toshinori to sink back into his bed in exhaustion. He still didn't think young Midoriya would survive all three years in the hero course, but he supposed he could give the boy a chance, if only for his friend's sake.

He just hoped the boy would prove him wrong.

Back to School

Chapter Summary

Izuku has another lesson with Nedzu

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! So we have exceeded 100,000 hits, which feels like a major milestone! To celebrate, I wanted to do something special for you guys, so I will be doing a voice reveal. Leave me questions in the comments of this chapter, and I will include a recording of me answering them in the notes of the next chapter. Feel free to ask me anything, I just won't answer anything to personal or give spoilers for my stories.
Again, thank you everyone for reading this story! You make me so happy!

Izuku laughed when he saw Aizawa walk into the classroom literally mummy wrapped from head to toe. Yeah, he'd seen him in the hospital, but that had looked like he belonged. Here, he seemed to be pretending he was fine, he was even wearing his hero gear like normal, but at the same time looked like he was cosplaying as an ancient Egyptian. Izuku grabbed his phone and snapped a picture, quickly sending it to Joke, who sent back an unintelligible string of emojis.

"Ahem." Izuku smiled sheepishly at Aizawa, who was glaring at him. Don't ask how Izuku knew he glaring at him, considering Aizawa's eyes were almost completely covered in bandages and there was no way anyone would be able to make out any facial expressions underneath all those, but Izuku could just feel it. Kaminari and Sero had started giggling and Izuku's grin just got wider, overshooting innocent and landing squarely in shit-eating territory.

Aizawa stared at him for another long moment before he seemingly gave up and sighed, "The UA sports festival is in two weeks. This is your chance to impress pros, which will lead to internships and opportunities in the future, so don't mess it up."

"Excuse me, Aizawa-Sensei!" Iida raised his hand high. "Is it really wise to hold the sports festival right after an attack?"

"It wasn't my decision." Aizawa said dully. "I think it's irrational, but

the school has decided we need to show we're not intimidated by the actions of these villains, so it's happening. Your responsibility is to be ready."

"Yes sir!"

By the time lunch came around, everyone was a lot more excited than fearful. Izuku smiled as he saw his classmate's determination to show off their quirks to the pros, even if they all took very different approaches. Uraraka especially was more determined than Izuku had ever seen her. For his part, Izuku wasn't concerned about being scouted by pros. He was going underground and most of the pros he would work with for internships already knew who he was, so the sports festival wouldn't make a huge difference for him professionally like it would for his classmates. What Izuku *was* worried about was proving that a quirkless kid like him could stand on equal footing as the kids with powerful quirks. Many people were still under the impression that Deku had an analysis quirk, and there were bound to be more heroes like All Might who insisted on believing that the quirkless had no place being heroes, so it was important that Izuku proved them all wrong.

So the major question was whether he should apply to bring some support gear. Would going into it with his gear even the playing field, or would it be a red flag that people would take as proof that the quirkless really were lesser? Izuku debated each side as he made his way to Nedzu's office for his personal lesson, which was a whole other moral dilemma. The more he and Nedzu delved into his old middle school, the more Izuku realized he wasn't the only victim of their neglect, but could he really justify destroying them? Was there a better way to make sure they didn't hurt anyone else, or was Nedzu's way the most effective course of action? What was the right thing to do here?

The door opened on it's own as Izuku raised his hand to knock and he smiled as he walked in to find Nedzu already sitting at his desk, pouring tea, "Hello Midoriya! How are you today? Is your arm recovering well from Shigaraki's attack?"

Izuku nodded and lifted his sleeve so Nedzu could see the bandages still covering his forearm, "Recovery Girl wants me to keep it covered for the next week or so, but it's already scarring over, so it's mostly just a precaution."

Nedzu nodded, "Good, I am happy to hear that. I am also sorry that

you and your classmates had to go through that. Warp quirks are always tricky in terms of tightening security."

Izuku nodded, "Especially unregistered warp quirks."

Nedzu tilted his head, "What?"

"Oh, um, I was just looking into quirk records, Tsukauchi gave me access don't worry, to see if I could track the leaders of the league down based on their quirks, but I couldn't find anything at all on Kurogiri's." Izuku took a sip of tea and frowned. "It's like the quirk itself shouldn't exist. I still need to think about what quirks could realistically combine to create Warp Gate though, before I really say anything else. Maybe his parents are in the records, even if he's not."

Nedzu nodded, smiling, "Very good! I'm sure that will be a very interesting endeavor. Did you find anything else interesting?"

Izuku was silent for a moment. Did Nedzu know about All Might's quirk? Because All Might and All for One were definitely linked, or they would be if Izuku could prove his theory that All for One either had an immortality quirk or was an inheritable quirk like All Might's. Maybe he could ask Tsukauchi to let him use the department's facial recognition software to disprove the immortality theory. But even if All Might was teaching at UA and using it to mentor Toogata, there was no guarantee that Nedzu knew that and if not, Izuku didn't want to give him any hints, but...he couldn't just keep something this big to himself.

"Well, um, you know how Shigaraki offered…"

"Offered you a quirk?" Nedzu finished.

Izuku nodded hesitantly, "Well, um, I was thinking about what he said, that his sensei could give and take quirks. It's theoretically possible, if that was his quirk. And that would make this Sensei the true leader of the league, not Shigaraki, which is even more likely due to Shigaraki's temperament."

"I was beginning to suspect as much." Nedzu said. "This Sensei must be powerful indeed if he was able to convince so many to follow a volatile manchild such as Shigaraki."

"Exactly! So far actually it's been easier to find info on who Sensei might be than it is to find info on Shigaraki and Kurogiri, but it's also almost impossible to separate the truth from the legends."

“Well, I have found that legends are often based on truth.” Nedzu leaned forward, not bothering to hide his interest. “So what have you found?”

“Well, the story goes that back when quirks first appeared, there was a man who went by the name of All for One who had Sensei’s quirk. I think that part’s true, at least, I could find a lot of sources before he accumulated enough support to disappear into the shadows. I’m still not sure how exactly Sensei connects to that original All for One, but I’m fairly certain there’s a connection. The quirks are too big of a coincidence to be anything else.”

Nedzu stared at him seriously, “If so, that would make him a very powerful villain. I’m concerned that you’ve stumbled across a very dangerous piece of information, Midoriya. Perhaps it would be wisest if you did not look into it further.”

“With all due respect, Nedzu, I don’t think it’s going to make much of a difference whether I know about All for One or not. I’ve obviously already caught his attention and made an enemy out of Shigaraki, so it’s not like I’m going to be in any more danger just because I know too much, Actually, my best bet is probably to know as much as I possibly can about my enemy before I have to face him.” Izuku smiled. “I’m living proof that knowledge is power.”

“That you are! Well, I must ask that you keep me informed of what you find, because this is dangerous information, but I will trust your judgement for now. Is that agreeable?”

Izuku nodded and Nedzu responded by clapping his hands together, “Perfect! Well, in that case, perhaps we should continue our lessons where we left off before this unfortunate attack. Now where were we?”

“We were talking about safety rhetoric.” Izuku said. “That many times, popular villains will argue that their wrong actions are actually necessary to keep people safe. Like how an abusive boyfriend will defend his jealousy by saying he doesn’t want his significant other to get hurt by other men.”

“Good example.” Nedzu grinned. “Now, how do you think your old school used this rhetoric to their advantage?”

Izuku thought for a moment, “Well, that’s kind of difficult, because they never really tried saying they were protecting me, but…I guess from their perspective, they probably thought they were protecting

the kids with quirks, the ones with strong quirks especially."

"Can you expound on that a little moret?"

"Well," Izuku pinched his bottom lip as he sorted through his thoughts, "if they had punished Katsuki for his treatment of me like they were supposed to, it probably would have gone on his record and he wouldn't have been able to get into UA. If they had been called on it, they probably would have said they were protecting Katsuki's future and prioritizing the children with the most potential. Is that right?"

Nedzu took a sip of tea, "Well, it is morally reprehensible, but that is a good example of how people will often try to use protection as a tool to justify their own wrong doings. Good work. Now, how do you think we could combat this."

"We'd have to find ways to poke holes in their logic." Izuku said. "If we could show that they are not protecting anyone, then their entire argument would fall apart."

Nedzu nodded, "Good. Now practice doing that with the argument you just put forth on your old school's behalf that they were protecting Bakugo."

"My first thought would be that I, as a quirkless person, deserve protection too." Izuku began. "But I'm not sure that would be the best way to do it."

"I am inclined to agree with you, but can you explain your reasons?"

"People don't let go of their prejudices easily and if society didn't have prejudice, then this wouldn't have happened in the first place. While there will be some people that will agree that my well being is just as important as Katsuki's, there will probably be even more that will agree with my school, even if they wouldn't say so out loud."

Nedzu nodded, "So…?"

"So we need to make the *strength* of their argument into its *weakness* !" Izuku smiled. "Their main argument is that they were protecting Katsuki, so what if we could prove that they were doing the exact opposite and make it about the quirked students, not the quirkless ones! We could point out what we've already realized: that their "protection" of him was actually harmful because it enabled harmful behaviors and anger issues that are going to have to be resolved *now* ,

rather than being resolved when they first appeared back in elementary school. They put Katsuki behind socially and emotionally, so they didn't have his best interests at heart at all. If we spun it right, we could even say they were simply using these strong kids as tools to abuse children, which would cause public outrage!"

Nedzu smiled proudly, "Very good, Midoriya. I dare say you're getting the hang of this! Have you given any thought to if you would like to go public with this information?"

Izuku nodded, "I've thought a lot about it, actually, and I think taking them down is the right decision. They've hurt a lot of people, not just me, and will continue hurting people if they're allowed to, so it's my responsibility as a future hero to make sure they stop, right?"

"Very good! Then for your next assignment, I would like you to create a post that just barely scratches the surface of the issues we've discussed. It's much better to go slowly in these kinds of things, afterall, so the effects are more permanent. Then research which would be the best forums and times to post such a thing anonymously, and then when we discuss it next week, I'll let you know how you did and if there's a way to do it better. Does that sound agreeable?"

Izuku nodded eagerly.

"Very well!" Nedzu smiled and stood, walking Izuku to the door. "Good work today, Midoriya. You had better get going to heroics. You may be ahead of many of your peers, but it is still important that you prepare well for the sports festival."

"Yes sir!"

Therapy

Chapter Summary

Katsuki works though his guilt from the USJ.

Chapter Notes

Yay! Here's my voice recording, so listen to me ramble!

“So are you just gonna sit there in surly silence for the whole session, or are we actually going to talk about what’s bothering you?”

“Nothing’s bothering me, mutt!” Katsuki snapped. “Maybe I just don’t want to talk to an idiot like you, ever thought of that?”

Hound Dog chuckled, “Yeah, I thought about it brat, but I figured I don’t really care. Besides, you just went through your first real villain attack…”

“Second.”

Hound Dog tilted his head, “Second?”

Katsuki was silent for a moment, “The sludge villain. It was like a year ago. I was on the news and everything. Everybody saw.”

“Hmm.” Hound Dog thought for a moment, “I think I remember something about that. Two kids got caught up in the attack. Who was the other?”

“Deku.”

Hound Dog nodded, “One of the kids ran in to try to save the other. I take it you ran in to save Midoriya?”

Katsuki silently stared at the floor.

“Ahhh…I see.”

“Yeah.” Katsuki huffed. “And then I was just another weak-ass victim again at the USJ.”

“Are you sure? Because I heard you managed to pin the warp gate. That doesn’t sound like a victim to me.”

“Thirteen got hurt because of me!” Katsuki yelled. “If I hadn’t run in at the beginning, they would have been able to suck up that stupid warp villain. And then I got warped away with shitty hair, so it would have been my fault if he got hurt too.”

“Shitty hair?” Hound Dog tilted his head slightly.

“Kirishima.” Katsuki grumbled.

“Oh, so he’s your friend?”

“We’re not friends, mutt!” Katsuki glared at him. “He’s just some stupid extra who follows me around.”

Hound Dog grinned behind his muzzle, “And yet you know his name.”

Katsuki opened and closed his mouth a few times before slouching back into the couch, “Shut up, you stupid mutt.”

Hound Dog’s laugh sounded like a bark, “Fine brat, we can talk about something else. But just for the record, I’m glad you’re making friends.” Katsuki gave him a dirty look, but he just laughed again, “Ok, dropping it! But I did want to dig deeper into your guilt about Thirteen getting hurt. Why not blame the warp villain? He is the one that actually hurt them, right?”

“I still got in the way. I was worse than useless.”

“Yeah, maybe at that point, you were. I can give you that. You ran in without thinking, and someone got hurt. There’s no point in trying to pretend that didn’t happen.” Hound Dog said. “That being said, it’s your choice where we go from here. We can try to work through some of the guilt you feel about Thirteen’s injury, or we can talk through some strategies to make sure something like this doesn’t happen again.”

“What?” Katsuki looked at Hound Dog skeptically, “You’re not gonna force me to talk about my feelings?”

Hound Dog shook his head, “I already told you, brat, I’m not here to force you to do anything. If you feel like strategies are going to be more useful for you right now than trying to figure out that tangled ball of emotions you feel, I’m just along for the ride.”

Katuski thought for a moment, “So what? How do I make sure nobody gets hurt because of me?”

Hound Dog shrugged, “I’ll be honest, you’ll never be able to completely. We’re heroes, people get hurt in our line of work, but that doesn’t mean we can’t target what led to this disaster and fix it. So what happened?”

“You said it yourself,” Katsuki grumbled, “I ran in without thinking and someone got hurt.”

“Running in without thinking, hmm.” Hound Dog wrote something down. “That seems like something you do a lot. You’re a smart kid, brat, I’ve seen how you fight, but the fact is that when you act without thinking, people get hurt.”

“What?” That seemed way too general. “How did we get from Thirteen to whatever the hell it is you’re talking about?”

“Did you ever stop to think when you were bullying Midoriya?” Hound Dog asked pointedly.

Katuski thought for a moment. Had he ever thought about it? Had he ever really stopped to decide to be mean to Deku, or was it just something he did because it felt good in the moment?

“Fine, you stupid mutt.” He said finally. “Let’s say that’s part of the problem. How do I fix it?”

Hound Dog smiled, “You stop to think.”

Katuski scoffed, “I can see why they pay you the big bucks.”

Hound Dog laughed, “I know it sounds simple, brat, but it really isn’t. It might be the hardest thing you’ll ever do, and you’re going to fall a lot of times before thinking first becomes a habit. So I guess it just comes down to if you’re up for a challenge?”

Katsuki grinned, “I’m always up for a challenge, you stupid mutt! That’s what makes me the best!”

Preparations

Chapter Summary

Preparing for the Sports Festival.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! So you know how I slowed down because of midterms? Yeah, well, that's not really working for me, so I'm speeding back up to every other day. Yes, I know I'm insane. Yes, I will warn you if I start getting burned out and need to slow down again. The thing is, I do really well with routine, but what with the quarantine and everything, my entire schedule got pushed off the rails entirely overnight. I need something consistent and that something just happens to be writing and posting, so you guys get to benefit from this whole situation!
In other news, happy St. Patrick's day. If you aren't wearing green, pinch yourself for me, since social distancing means no one else is going to do it.

All for One leaned back in his chair as his computer read the article aloud again. It had been published anonymously on several major hero forums a few days ago and had gone viral almost immediately.

“Is Discrimination Hurting The Gifted?”

The writer didn’t go into much detail, but they provided some troublesome statistics that seemed to prove that students with strong quirks were actually worse off because adults treated them as better than their peers. Even though the argument was counterintuitive, it had already sparked major controversy and even inspired a few activist groups to take up the cause. He would have to find whoever wrote the article and put an end to them. It just wouldn’t do if society realized that their own hero system was responsible for most of the villains on the street and took steps to fix it. If the weakings were no longer oppressed, there would be fewer desperate people for him to manipulate and add to his army. He much preferred the current hero system, all things considered.

Which, of course, brought him to his next problem: Deku. The boy was intriguing, and definitely had a lot of potential, but if a quirkless weaking like him was able to become a hero, it would disprove the right equals might mentality that made so many wonderful villains

and might spark annoying changes. All for One had thought the boy would jump at the chance to have a quirk because it should have been his greatest weakness and insecurity. Giving him a quirk should have put Deku's valuable mind under All for One's control and added a powerful pawn to his army.

But not only had Deku apparently soundly rejected the offer, he had damaged his masterpiece! It was a smart move that might have made All for One proud if Deku had been on his side, but he had had to temporarily transfer his self-healing quirk to Tomura just so his finger would reattach, and even then it had been severed too long and Disintegration would always be weak and finicky on his left. If All for One hadn't spent so much effort making sure Tomura's true identity would be a devastating blow to All Might, he would have been tempted to throw the boy away and start over, but as it was, the boy would have to do even in his weakened state.

So that left what to do with Deku. If Tomura wasn't still healing, he would just ask him to kill Deku as he walked home from school, but unfortunately that wasn't an option, even if Tomura would jump at the chance. All for One could always have someone else commit the murder, but that just didn't have the same poetic quality and it wouldn't have the same effect on All Might as one of his students being killed by a villain he let get away.

All for One sighed as the article finished. Maybe he should wait until after the sports festival? There was always the chance Deku would do terribly and take himself out of the running, in which case the problem would go away, and even if he did well, it wouldn't be too much longer until Tomura healed. Either way, he wasn't going to let this *minor inconvenience* grow for too long.

"Well done, Midoriya!" Nedzu poured tea for them both as Izuku sat down for his usual lesson. "I was skeptical about combating the issue separated from the school, but I believe it's gone over rather well, don't you think?"

"You were skeptical?" Izuku asked. "Then why'd you let me do it?"

"I wanted to see how it turned out!" Nedzu sipped his tea. "This is, afterall, your project, and you seemed convinced it would work out. Things like this often seem to work better when the public has a clear enemy that they can crucify, enemies tend to unite people you know, but in this case it appears to be different, why do you think that is?"

“Hmm,” Izuku thought for a moment, “actually I don’t think it is that different.”

“Go on.”

“Well, the main reason I decided to address the issue thematically first was because I finally realized that Aldera probably isn’t the only school where this is an issue. I was afraid that if Aldera was the only enemy from the beginning, the issue would end as soon as they were shut down or forced to reform, but the deeper issues that led to their abuse would remain unaddressed. But now, people are seeing the issue, not a scapegoat, which has led them to see society as the enemy, which is more accurate anyway. Does that make sense?”

Nedzu smiled, “It seems as though your goal has changed, then. You are no longer simply focused on bringing down your abusers, but on creating meaningful change. That is a lofty goal you’ve set for yourself.”

Izuku smiled sheepishly, “Yeah, I guess. But it needs to be done and if I don’t do it, who will? Besides, I’m already trying to change the system by becoming the first quirkless hero, so I guess it makes sense that I’d be the one behind other major changes too, right?”

“Very good! I congratulate you on the success of this first endeavor, but of course, it is going to take more than one inflamitory article to create the lasting change you’re going for.”

“I’m ready!”

“Good!” Nedzu clapped his hands together, “But speaking of you being the first quirkless hero, how are your preparations for the sports festival going?

“Really well!” Izuku smiled. “The spars we have in hero class are really helpful, and I’ve also been working on my analysis and making sure I can not only identify weaknesses in a quirk, but I can figure out how to exploit them quickly. But,” Izuku bit his lip, “umm, I was wondering if I could get some advice.”

“Of course!” Nedzu smiled. “That is my duty as an educator, afterall.”

Izuku nodded quickly, “Um, I was wondering whether or not I should apply to be able to use my weapons. You see, I don’t want people to see me with a weapon and think *oh, the only reason he’s able to win is because he has weapons,* because then I’m afraid they’ll just see me as a

quirkless weaking that's only able to be on par with the other kids because of my weapons and I really want to prove that…"

Nedzu held up a hand to stop Izuku's rambling, "Ah, I see the issue here. You of course want to prove that you're just as capable as the other students, even though you're quirkless, and you believe that using weapons to make up for the difference would get in the way of the message you're trying to send. Is that correct?"

Izuku nodded, "But I'm also scared that if I don't use weapons, I *won't* be able to beat some of the stronger students, especially in the individual rounds. What if I get paired against someone like Todoroki? If I lose to a student with a strong quirk because I don't use a weapon, they'll see the fact that I lost as proof that the quirkless can't be heroes."

"This is quite the pickle." Nezu took a sip of his tea. "Well, are you worried about the first two rounds?"

"Not really. I beat your obstacle course in the entrance exam no problem, so whatever the first two rounds end up being, I think I'm smart enough to get past them, even if I don't have any of my weapons."

"Hmm…have you considered applying to be allowed weapons, then only using them in the one on one battles? That way, you could prove you're capable without them, while still giving yourself the greatest possible chance of success."

"That's brilliant! It's like the best of both worlds! I think I'll do that."

Nedzu chuckled, "Glad I could help."

Izuku pinched his bottom lip and started to mutter as he stood and headed for the door to get to his next class, "I still think I should probably limit my weapons to just one gun and one knife, though. I don't want people to say I had an unfair advantage or was overcompensating for my lack of quirk, maybe…"

Nedzu shook his head fondly as he watched his student almost run into the door before remembering he should probably open it. If nothing else, the sports festival this year would definitely be interesting.

Hitoshi Shinso didn't hestiate as he joined the crowd outside 1A's

classroom. This would probably be his best chance to see his competition and figure out what made them tick before the sports festival. He needed to know what would annoy each of them, what would make them talk. He smiled slightly as the door opened and a few students reared back in shock at seeing themselves trapped in the room. Ok, so the guy in glasses was a bit uptight, he might be able to get him to talk by being flippant, the green haired one seemed insecure, so he could probably use that, and...man that blond guy was a jerk. Maybe it was time to get involved, get up close and personal so he knew what buttons to push in the festival.

Hitoshi shouldered his way through the crowd until he was standing right in front of the blond guy, “Is everyone in the hero course delusional, or is it just you?”

The others seemed scared, so the blond one had a temper. Nice to know.

“How disappointing. I wanted to be in the hero course, but like many others here, I was forced to pick a different track. Such is life. But now I have another chance because if any of us do well, they’ll transfer us to the hero course. Of course, that means they’d have to transfer someone out to make room.” Hitoshi smiled slightly as 1A gasped. Maybe he should say something else to put them on edge? They’d probably be more likely to respond if they were already uncomfortable around him and saw him as a threat. “I’m here to warn you that if you don’t do your best, I’ll steal your spot right out from under you.”

He let himself fade into the background as a *very* loud 1B student started yelling. He watched the students’ reactions carefully, paying special attention to who their friends were in case getting them to talk about themselves wasn’t enough. He’d made them nervous. Good.

Now all he had to do was follow through on his threat.

Nervous

Chapter Summary

Let the sports festival begin!

Thankfully the stadium was large enough to give each class their own locker room. Izuku wasn't quite sure what he would've done if they'd been forced to share a space with the other classes, especially since Katsuki made them all want to murder their class with his behavoir a few days ago.

Pretty much everyone was sitting in nervous silence and those that weren't were filling the space with small talk. This was going to be their chance to really let the world see them, it was...their debut in a way. The sports festival was always like this, but it was worse for 1A because the world was expecting great things from the class that had survived the USJ attack. And it was even worse for Izuku because he had to show that a quirkless kid was capable of being a hero. It was just *so much pressure!*

"Midoriya."

Izuku looked up to see Todoroki standing in front of him, looking as passive and determined as ever. Todoroki had a strange fire in his eyes, though, that Izuku hadn't really seen before. What was this about?

"From an objective standpoint," Todorki said, "I'm stronger than you."

Izuku hunched his shoulders slightly, "Um, yeah. Everyone here is, really."

"However, you've got the backing of a lot of heroes, not to mention all the experience you had before even coming to UA. I think you're the only one here that has their own reputation already built. I know most of us wish we had that, rather than being known by our quirks or who our parents are, so know that I will beat you."

"Whoa!" Kaminari smiled. "What's with all these declarations of war lately?"

"We're not here to be each other's friends." Todoroki swept the room with a glare.

Izuku forced himself to stop trembling. Yeah, Todoroki was stronger than him, and he had kinda hoped he'd be able to start the festival without any glaring reminders that he was biologically weaker than everyone else, but that didn't matter!

"Todoroki, I don't know what's going through your head, or why you feel the need to tell me that you'll beat me, but you're not the only one with something to prove. The other courses will be coming for us and we're *all* going to have to fight to stand out. I'll be aiming for the top too, so if this is a declaration of war, I accept."

Shouta really didn't want to be here. Not that he was mad about having to attend the sports festival, even though he thought it was a case study of everything that was wrong with the hero system, but why had he let Mic bully him into being an announcer? Well, at least he'd get to see Deku showing off and wouldn't have to deal with the crowds in the stands, so it wasn't *all* bad.

There was a knock on the door of the announcer booth and Shouta looked at Mic skeptically, "I thought no one was allowed to be up here but us?"

"They aren't!" Mic stood to answer the door, both because Shouta wasn't supposed to be moving around a lot during his recovery and because he probably wouldn't have stood to answer the door even if he *had* been completely healthy. "Oh! Ms. Joke, what are you doing here?"

"Shouta!" Fukukado swept past Mic and hugged Shouta. "I can't believe this cockatoo talked you into announcing!"

"Ow…"

Fukukado jumped back, "I am so sorry! You know I'm just a touchy person and I forgot, but I really shouldn't have forgotten, I mean I visited you in the hospital…"

Shouta readjusted in his chair, "Don't worry about it Fukukado, you're rambling almost as much as Deku."

Fukukado chucked, "Yeah, I guess the kiddo's habits are kinda contagious, aren't they? How are you Shouta?"

Mic caught Shouta's eye from behind Fukukado and mouthed, "*Shouta?!*"

Shouta shot him a glare, then turned back to Fukukado, “I’m fine, Fukukado. Everything hurts and I’m stuck in here with someone even louder than you, so I don’t know who I pissed off in a past life, but there’s more room in here to nap than there is in the stands, so there’s that.”

Fukukado laughed and Shouta didn’t know when he’d started enjoying that sound so much. By all means, it didn’t really make any logical sense. Her laugh was loud, almost explosive, and Shouta was quiet and introverted, so her laugh should be annoying and make him wish life had a mute button like it used to, so since when did he want to hear more of it?

“Did you find a good seat Ms. Joke?” Mic asked.

Fukukado nodded, “Yeah, I’m sitting with Brave and we’ve got a pretty good view of the first years. Boring old Nighteye decided to watch the third years.”

“Yeah well, it’s his intern’s last year, so he probably wants to watch him.” Shouta pointed out.

“So? He’s already seen Toogata in two sports festivals, and trained him personally so he already knows what he’s capable of!” Fukukado huffed. “Deku, on the other hand, always seems to find a way to surprise! Brave and I are sitting with some other underground heroes and you should hear the chatter!”

Shouta smiled slightly, knowing she couldn’t see it behind the bandages, “Oh? And what are they saying about the problem child?”

Fukukado smiled brightly, “Just that he’s sure to win the whole thing! No, but really, most heroes still haven’t ever seen him in person, so they’re super excited to see him.” Fukukado frowned. “But I’m kinda concerned too. There are rumors running around that he’s quirkless, which of course he is, but the reception to that has been kinda mixed. Most of the underground heroes don’t mind, because we don’t have powerful quirks either, but some of the daylight heroes are staunchly denying that it’s even a possibility. They’re the same ones that are arguing that if he *is* quirkless, there’s no way he’ll make it past the second round. They say it’s *an unfortunate truth.* Huh! The nerve of them!”

Shouta scowled, “I agree. What is it about a powerful quirk that automatically makes people into bigots?”

“Hey!” Mic said loudly. “Some of us aren't that bad!”

Fukukado laughed, “I don’t know, Mic...maybe you’re just bad in a different way?”

Shouta nodded solemnly, “Yes, there are two categories of daylight heroes, hopeless bigots and hopelessly annoying.”

Mic stared at Shouta for a moment before laughing, “Oh my, Joke, how did you infect him with a sense of humor?”

“Oh Shouta’s always had a sense of humor, I think.” Fukukado laughed. “It was just buried deep down, right next to his will to live.”

Shouta glared at his friends as they laughed their heads off, “You come into *my* space…”

“Actually, it’s technically Mic’s space.” Fukukado gasped.

“What she said!” Mic smiled.

Shouta tried to glare harder despite knowing that they’d just ignore him, “You two are insufferable.”

“Aww!” Fukukado pouted, “But you love us anyway!”

“Are you sure?”

Mic laughed, then glanced at the clock, “Oh crap, we need to start hyping for the festival. You’d probably better get back to your seat, Joke, the kids’ll be coming out soon.”

“Oh, you’re right!” She opened the door. “I’ll be listening for your commentary! Bye-bye Shouta!”

Shouta was already taking his seat, “Goodbye Emi.”

Shouta froze. He hadn’t meant to do that, it’s just that she’d been calling him by his first name since the hospital and then he just got caught up in the moment and…he hesitantly glanced up at her. Her entire face was covered with a light blush and when she saw him looking, she gave him a soft smile.

“Bye, Shouta.”

He nodded and she ran out of the room. Mic closed the door behind her, then turned to Shouta with a smug look that Shouta knew meant

he was trying not to laugh.

“Oh, shut up, Mic.” He grumbled, turning back toward the stadium. “She calls me by my first name, it’s only logical I should call her by hers.”

“Right…” Mic drawled. “I’m sure logic is deffinatly the *only* reason why… not to mention it was only logical for her to come out of her way to visit you here, or it was only logical of you to crack dumb jokes to impress her. Mhm, *logic.* ”

Shouta glared at him, “Don’t you have anything better to do?”

Mic laughed, but turned on the mic in front of him, “Good morning everybody! Can I get a *Plus Ultra* !?”

Obstacles

Chapter Summary

The obstacle course

Chapter Notes

Ok, so you guys have chosen to read my story, a poor decision really, because now you must be subjected to my weirdest theories and headcanons.
So, I was originally going to just skip the first two rounds of the sports festival, since they pretty much go exactly according to canon, and if you wanted to watch that, you'd just re-watch the show. But then I got the brilliant idea to mess with the POV and well, I hope you enjoy!

Momo kept an eye on Todoroki as they stepped out into the arena. He kept glaring at the stands like they had personally offended him, but considering that his father was here, she guessed they kinda had. Her own father was sitting in the front row, the best money could buy and her mother… Momo glanced up at Midnight on the stands. Most people didn't really know Midnight had a family and those that had caught on didn't believe it. Her mom had always been independent, which was why she had never taken her husband's name.

Momo's quirk was more similar to her father's since he could transform one object into another by holding it in his fist if he knew the chemical makeup of both, but the inner workings of her quirk came from her mother. Her mom's quirk worked because the lipids in her body had a sleep inducing compound in them, so when she vaporized those cells, it created a potent sleeping gas. There were reasons both of their costumes relied on maximum skin exposure, afterall.

Her parents had fallen in love because Dad cared more about her mom's personality than her body, which Mom thought was a nice change of pace. He had a comfortable career in manufacturing, but most of their family fortune was actually from Mom's hero pay and merchandise sales. When Momo had been born, they decided that she should be a Yaoyorozu like her dad, not a Kayama like her mom so that she wouldn't have to follow in her mother's footsteps if she didn't want to.

From the little Todoroki had told her about his family life, Endeavor was the complete opposite. He wanted Todoroki to carry on his legacy, so had started training him as soon as he got his quirk. It was completely foreign to her. Her parents had always been very clear that she was allowed to pursue whatever career she wanted and supported her when she decided she wanted to be a hero like her mom, if not quite as sexy.

She didn't think Todoroki ever got that, and she'd known him most of her life since his father had always dragged him to the same parties and galas her parents had taken her to as a kid. They were both the children of pro-heroes, so they had something in common and had become...well, she wasn't sure if best friends was the right phrase, since she could never remember him coming over for playdates, but they were definitely close. Momo had been so happy when she'd shown up the first day and found out they were in the same class.

There were a lot of whispers as Bakugo took the stage to give the welcome speech. She understood why recommendation students weren't in the running to give the speech, but did it have to be Bakugo? He *had* been a little tamer recently, but there was still no way he was the best person to represent their class, much less their entire grade!

"I just wanna say, go at it with everything you've got…" Hmm, maybe she'd been nervous for nothing. Encouraging everyone to do their best was the perfect… "Because I'm gonna win."

Was it bad of her to want to take back those nice thoughts? Well, admitting when one was wrong was part of being a hero too, right? She wasn't being impolite to Bakugo, she was just privately admitting that she had made a temporary error in judgement. Yes, that was it.

"Alright! This qualifying round is to bring the pain! The first fateful game of the festival is…" Mom cracked her whip, "an obstacle course!"

The students all shuffled over to the entrance to the course and got ready to run as Mom kept talking.

"As long as you stay on the track, you're free to do whatever your heart desires! Begin!"

Almost instantly, it was like Momo had been teleported back to the day when the press broke into UA, only this time, Iida wasn't going to be flying over their heads telling them not to panic. Bodies pressed in

on her from every direction as she realized that the door itself was probably the first obstacle. Suddenly a chill passed over the crowd and her feet were encased in ice. She looked up and saw Shouto taking the lead. Momo didn't waste any time sliding her feet out of her shoes and creating a pole so she could vault over the frozen crowd, creating new shoes around her feet while she was in midair, "Nice trick, Todoroki!"

She glanced behind her to see that pretty much everyone from their class as well as quite a few other students had managed to either escape or evade the ice. Looks like Todoroki's trump card wasn't as effective as he'd hoped. Bakugo was yelling something as usual, and Mineta was actually showing some creativity for once as he used his balls to avoid slipping. Momo had to cover a smile as the pervert was literally slapped out of the air by a robot. Yes, it probably wasn't nice to smile at her classmate's misfortunes but...well, Mom had always said one had to be respectful to gain respect.

There was a tell-tale chill in the air right before Todoroki froze the robots in place and she was about to run forward when she heard him speak.

"Careful, I froze them while they were off their balance…"

That was all the warning they got before the two giant robots crashed down onto the course. Had anyone been under there? Yeah, it was a brilliant defensive move on Todoroki's part but…

"Hey!" Kirishima popped up from the downed robot, "If it was anybody else trapped under there, they'd be dead!"

Good, it was just Kirishima and...his twin? Wow, what were the odds, no wonder those two had been put in different classes! As much as she wanted to look around and see how her classmates were fighting these robots, she knew they'd fought them before and so had an advantage over her. Right now, she needed to concentrate. Ok, so what was she going to need? An iron alloy, gunpowder...and of course either a match or a lighter. She unbuttoned her shirt quickly before the cannon could rip through it. She'd created it preloaded with a few different cannonballs that would shoot out automatically every few seconds as soon as it was lit, so now all that was left was…Momo created a lighter in her hand and lit the wick, then took aim at the biggest robots. If she took them down, she could dodge the smaller ones in the chaos.

The cannon had a slight kickback, but she still managed to take down

three robots before she was out of ammo, “Piece of cake!”

She ran forward and dodged through the dust until she got past the robot field. She really hoped the next obstacle wouldn’t require such a big object. She’d stashed some high fat snacks in her locker, but they wouldn’t help her if she ran out of lipids halfway through the first round. There was a crowd up ahead of her, what were they waiting for?

“This is the perfect chance to show off my babies to any companies that might want to recruit me!” A student with pink hair laughed maniacally before jumping off...was that a cliff? Momo saw a wire glinting in the sunlight and followed it down until she saw where it attached to the crazy girl. Oh thank goodness, she must be a support student.

Momo glanced at some of her classmates already on the ropes. Asui was using her quirk to her advantage, Midoriya was simply crawling upside-down with some sort of metal strapped to his back, and Shoji...Shoji was using his arms like a flying squirrel to almost fly between the various outcroppings of rock. Was there enough of an updraft for that? Momo put her hand out over the ledge to feel the breeze and smiled. Lightweight aluminum, polyester and… ready! It took a moment, but soon she was pulling a hang-glider from her torso. She gripped the handles and backed up, took a running start and jumped off the cliff.

The breeze ruffled her ponytail as she flew over the obstacle. She even got halfway to the next before there wasn’t enough wind to keep her airborne anymore. Momo tossed the glider to the side and ran as she listened to Present Mic announcing the final obstacle. A minefield. How was she supposed to get past that? Was there anything she could make?

She shook her head. No, the best strategy was probably to just go slowly and try to avoid as many as she could. She ran, keeping her eyes on the ground and trying not to flinch as explosions went off all around her. If only there was enough of an updraft here for her to use her hang-glider again. There was a shout behind her and suddenly, she felt like she was wearing a backpack. She turned around, but no one was there trying to hold her back. She kept running, but she was getting tired since the extra weight hadn’t gone away. What was happening?

Momo jumped as a huge explosion went off behind her.

“That was way bigger than it was supposed to be!” Present Mic shouted. “What’s that? Midoriya has taken the lead!”

“Whoa!” Mineta said. “Midoriya’s crazy!”

Momo looked around. Since when had Mineta caught up? Where was...wait a minute. She started forward, and...yes that extra weight was still there. If she had a quirk that allowed her to stick to anything and she had to use it in a creative way, well, she probably wouldn’t latch onto a classmate’s back, but there didn’t seem to be much of a limit to what Mineta was willing to do.

She hesitated a moment. The polite thing would be to let him hitch a ride, he was using his quirk creatively afterall, but that would just slow her down. She thought back to Midoriya and when he benefited from her quirk back during the entrance exam. This was the same thing, right? She looked forward in time to see him literally kick Todoroki and Bakugo to the ground to make sure he stayed in the lead.

No! Midoriya used other’s quirks to his advantage, yes, but he hadn’t hurt her performance in the entrance exam like Mineta was here. And besides, if even someone as nice as Midoriya was willing to knock a few heads in the name of competition, politeness had nothing to do with it! Momo grinned as she shrugged her arms out of her shirt and tossed it aside.

“Ahh!” Mineta scrambled to hold on and Momo scowled as she realized that he had stuck one of his sticky balls on her pants. Mineta was grabbing everywhere and drooling as he realized she was now only in her sports bra, “Boobs...Butt...So many beautiful choices!”

Actually, nevermind politeness, it was payback time, “Get off of me you pervert!” Momo reared back her fist and Mineta wasn’t fast enough to dodge the punch to the nose that finally dislodged him and sent him skidding into a row of landmines that exploded as Momo started running forward again. She glanced back one last time to see that the combined force of her punch and the landmines had knocked him out. Good riddance.

He should have known better than to mess with Midnight’s daughter.

Cavalry

Chapter Summary

The cavalry battle, this time from Hitoshi's perspective.

Hitoshi looked around the field as everyone started to split off into teams. He had hoped that the other gen-ed student would be willing to team up, but he had made a point to stand as far away from Hitoshi as possible and look away whenever he tried to catch his eye. Guess he didn't want to be on a team with the villain. All the hero course students were trying to team up with one another and avoiding him without even knowing his quirk, so Hitoshi figured they'd run away as soon as they knew.

Pretty much everyone was already teamed up except for that kid with 10 million points, but Hitoshi didn't want that much attention. The best option for his quirk would be to steal all of another team's points right at the end so no one had a chance to figure out his quirk. So he just needed to find a two or three member team to join. *There* .

There was the guy with a tail from 1A as well talking to the kid he'd seen shooting lasers from the same class. The third member of the team was a short kid from 1B, but Hitoshi didn't know what his quirk was. If they were willing to mix 1A and 1B, maybe they'd be willing to accept someone from gen-ed.

He jogged up to them, "Hey guys, do you need a fourth member?"

The 1B looked at the other two nervously, "Umm, I think we're good, thank you. It's just too big of a risk to have a gen-ed student on the team since we have no idea what you're capable of. You understand, don't you?"

Hitoshi fought to keep the smile on his face, "Aren't you at least going to ask about my quirk before rejecting me?"

The tail guy looked at him sternly, "Look dude, he was trying to be polite. I'm sure you could find another team, there's a couple other students that aren't from the hero course, aren't there?"

Of course there was, but he shouldn't have to segregate himself from the hero course, especially since that's where he was trying to get. Whatever, if they were going to judge him before even knowing him,

it was nothing new. He would rather work *with* them, rather than using them, but if he wanted to achieve his dream, he couldn't afford to be worried about what people thought of him.

He turned to the last member of the team, the laser kid. If he responded, Hitoshi would be on the team whether they wanted him or not, "Alright then, do you know what other teams might be willing to work with me?"

The laser kid shrugged, "Ah, mon cherie…"

Hitoshi didn't wait for him to finish before activating his quirk on all three of them, "Alright. You three will be the horses, I'll be the rider. Laser-boy you're on the left, Tail-boy, you're on the right, 1B, you're in front. Wait here while I get our headband."

Midnight was lounging on the stage with a small device she was using to print the headbands. There was a small line of other riders ahead of him, as it seemed like he was one of the last to find a team. The 10 million point kid jogged over from his team to stand behind him. It looked like he'd managed to snatch up that girl from support, so it'd be interesting to see how that turned out. Hitoshi didn't call any attention to himself as he waited his turn, finally getting to Midnight, who looked him up and down.

"Where's your team, handsome?"

Hitoshi pointed over to where his team was still standing dazed. Thankfully no one had run into them or tried to talk to them, but he didn't think they would. Everyone was too busy worrying about their own teams to talk to their friends. Midnight nodded, tallied the points and handed him a headband with a large red 295 printed on it. It was a good number of points, not that he'd keep them for long. It'd be best to lose them early so no one saw him as a threat.

"You the rider?" Midnight asked. Hitoshi nodded. "What's your name?"

"Hitoshi Shinso." He replied.

Midnight smiled, "Alright, you'll be known as team Shinso on the board. Good luck!"

Hitoshi nodded again and headed back to his team. He ordered them to pick him up, since climbing up might jostle them enough to break the brainwashing, and looked out over the other teams. Pretty much

everyone had stuck to their homerooms and other gen-ed student had joined some 1B kids. He put the headband on as Mic started announcing again.

“It looks like we have 12 calvary teams heading into battle!”

“I see some unexpected student combinations…” That must be Eraserhead, the other announcer. Hitoshi pushed down the lump of fear in his throat. Hopefully his idol wouldn’t judge him too harshly for brainwashing his teammates. He just...hadn’t seen another option.

“Let’s get this party started!” Mic yelled. “Three! Two! One!”

Midnight cracked her whip, “Begin!”

As expected, most teams charged straight for team Midoriya, Shinso learned his name from the scoreboard, and his 10 million points. Shinso ordered his team to start running around the periphery of the field. Standing still in a battle like this would call too much attention, but he didn’t need 10 million points to move on.

He honestly didn’t think Midoriya would have much luck running away until he launched his team into the air. Whatever support items that girl had brought were definitely impressive. Maybe if he got into the hero course, he’d have to have her cook something up for him. Hitoshi shook his head. *When! When* he got into the hero course.

A few teams had already lost their headbands and Hitoshi noticed that most of them had gone to one team of 1B students with a blond rider, team Monoma. If they kept going like this, they’d be the perfect mark for when he made his move at the end of the game. He’d have to keep his eye on them.

Midoriya’s team had taken to the sky again after being assaulted by three different teams at once, including one that seemed to only be one member with….a long tongue coming from between his arms? Weird.

Hitoshi saw team Monoma heading his way. He could probably evade, but if he dodged the wrong way, he risked waking up his team. Better to simply act like he was running away, since he didn’t need his own points to win this. Besides, if Monoma had more points, that was more points for Hitoshi to steal back from him at the end.

He ordered his team to run. But, when he saw that Monoma was close enough, they stopped and he pretended to be distracted by that rude

blond, Bakugo, that had somehow abandoned his team to chase Midoriya in a mid-air battle.

Monoma's team rushed past him and yanked the headband from Hitoshi's head before smiling smugly at him, "Sorry Shoda, but it serves you right for teaming with 1A!"

Shoda must be his puppet from 1B's name. He hadn't really had the chance to ask names before brainwashing them, so it was nice to know. Mic called attention to the scoreboard and Hitoshi smiled as he saw how many teams were sitting at zero points. He took note of who had the most. Midoriya, of course, Monoma, he already knew that, Tetsutetsu...which ones were they?

He glanced around until...oh that's right. Tetsutetsu was that guy with the steel quirk. Hitoshi honestly kinda hoped to avoid that team, if he could. That vine girl and the mud guy could keep him at a distance, so if he wanted to get their points he'd have to brainwash all of them at once, which might be difficult. Hopefully Monoma continued doing well.

"Your class is too small minded, you need to think bigger."

Nevermind. Monoma apparently had a death wish. Anyone with eyes could see that Bakugo had a temper, so taunting him was just asking to be destroyed. Oh well, it seemed like he'd be going after Tetsutetsu afterall.

"We decided to stay in the middle of the pack for the obstacle course and observe your quirks." Monoma bragged. It was a pretty decent strategy, one that Hitoshi himself had used, but it seemed that Monoma was trying to steal the spotlight earlier than Hitoshi was. "Only an idiot would try to place first in the qualifier!"

Yes, and only an idiot would provoke someone with rage issues. Hitoshi could practically feel Bakugo's bloodlust from here. His team tried to talk sense into him, but that obviously didn't work and Bakugo's team charged after Monoma.

Hitoshi felt a weird tingle go through the air and glanced over toward Midoiya's team, only to find an entire area of the field coated in electricity. As soon as the light faded, the temperature dropped and every single team that had been gunning for Midoriya's headband was frozen in ice. Hitoshi gulped and glanced down to make sure the sensations hadn't been enough to break his hold on his team. Ignoring Midoriya had been a good call. If he'd been any closer…

He kept his distance as Bakugo and Monoma faced off. A copy quirk. That was interesting. All these hero course students were just born lucky. Bakugo with his flashy quirk, Monoma who could take any quirk he wanted. Why was life so unfair? Why were these bastards born with a ticket to success while Hitoshi had to fight tooth and nail for even a *chance* to stand next to them? Why did he have to be born with a villain's quirk?

Hitoshi couldn't see Midoriya and Todoroki anymore, since they were surrounded by an ice wall, but he noticed that Midoriya hadn't taken to the sky again. That electric attack must have shorted out the tech he was using to fly. Monoma was actually managing to hold his own against Bakugo, at least for now. And Tetsutetsu had long since switched strategies and started going for points from the lower ranked teams.

"Sixty seconds left in the game!" Mic shouted.

Hitoshi grinned, time to make his move. He ordered his team toward Tetsutetsu as Bakugo finally finished destroying Monoma. Now what could he say to get all the members of the team to talk? He didn't want to get too close until they were under his control.

"Hey, your classmates seem to have made some stupid decisions! Wanna team up in the time we have left?"

There, if they wanted to team up, they'd say something, but if not, they'd speak up to defend their classmates.

"Alliances are..."

"What did you...!?"

"Why should we…?"

"Who are…"

Hitoshi smirked, "I win."

He ordered his team to run past them so he could swipe their headbands. He could feel his control starting to slip and the lights seemed too bright as the strain of his quirk made him lightheaded. It took a lot of effort to control this many people for this long, but he couldn't let go yet, not until this was over.

"10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1! Time's up!"

Conversation and Preparation

Chapter Summary

Lunch and some important conversations.

Chapter Notes

Ok, so I just need to get a few explanations out of the way. First, about what happened in the cavalry battle, I am assuming that it was practically identical to canon. The only differences here are that Mineta didn't make it to the second round and Izuku is quirkless. So, the boot didn't break, but they stopped flying because of jet-pack problems, not boot problems, so that ends up pretty similar. The only time that Izuku used his quirk was to blow out Todoroki's fire, but in this story, he'd trained with pro-heroes and his reflexes are faster, so he's able to either dodge the flames or knock his hand aside. He might have gotten some minor burns doing this, but nothing Recovery Girl couldn't fix.
Sorry for the monologue, just wanted to make sure you knew what happened with Izuku last round.

“And the fourth team advancing to the finals is…” Midnight checked the scoreboard one final time, “Team Midoriya!”

“Wow! Midoriya is really on fire today! Winning first in the first round, then only losing his lead in the final minutes of the cavalry battles.” Mic screamed. “If you hadn’t figured it out already, ladies and gentlemen, this student is one to watch! Any comments Eraserhead?”

“Only that Deku is known for his intelligence. He may not have a flashy quirk, but he more than makes up for it in skill and exploiting his opponent’s weaknesses. It will be interesting to see what he does in the next round, as well as how his opponents deal with someone who can outthink them.”

“Ohhh! I’m so excited I’m getting chills! We’re gonna have a break for lunch, but don’t party too hard people, preparations for the final round begin in an hour!”

Izuku didn’t really know what was going on. Todoroki had stalked over to him right as he’d finally managed to control his celebratory

tears, told him they needed to talk, then walked away. Izuku had followed him, of course, but Todoroki had led him to a shady tunnel, then proceeded to just stare at him. It had already passed the okay stage, landed solidly in weird and was fast approaching creepy.

“You made me break my oath.”

“umm...I didn’t mean to...What?”

Todoroki scowled and looked at his left hand, “That moment when you came after me in the cavalry battle, I felt so overwhelmed that I broke... I made a promise to myself a long time ago that I’d never use *his* fire. My father is the pro-hero Endeavor. With how much you know about everything, I have no doubt you’ve heard of him and must know he’s the number two hero. Since you’re involved with so many pro-heroes, that means I have even more reason to beat you. My old man is ambitious, but he was never able to best All Might. He’s determined to beat him though, one way or another.”

Izuku frowned. On the outside it seemed like a typical hero rivalry, pretty common, especially among the upper ranks, but something about the way Todoroki was talking made it sound like there was something Izuku was missing, “What are you trying to say Todoroki?”

“Have you ever heard of quirk marriages? They were popular back at the dawn of quirks and were clearly unethical, but that didn’t stop my old man. He’s got plenty of money to throw at his problems and paid off my mother’s family so he could get his hands on her quirk. From the moment I was born, he’s seen me as a tool to usurp All Might.”

Izuku was horrified. Was this what Nedzu had meant when he said that some villains were able to hide their true nature? Izuku had thought that meant people like his old school, or even some of the more popular vigilantes, but if Todoroki was telling the truth, then…

“In every memory I have of my mother, she’s crying. She called my left side unbearable before throwing boiling water on my face. My father doesn’t think fighting you is worth my time, since you don’t have a powerful quirk. While it’s true that you’ll never be number one, you’re skilled and well-connected. You’re the top student in our class when it comes to strategy. I picked a fight with you to prove that I don’t need his damned fire quirk to be the best. I’m going to show him that I reject his power and I can take first place without using it.”

“I…” What was he supposed to say to that? Yeah, Todoroki ate lunch with them, but Izuku didn’t think that was a close enough relationship

to share childhood trauma. But... it hurt to see Todoroki holding himself back, just because his father was a villain. “Did you know that the villains offered me a quirk, back at the USJ?”

Todoroki’s eyes widened, “No. What does that have to do…?”

Izuku chuckled, “I understand why you’re hesitant to use your fire quirk, Todoroki. But the thing you need to remember is that it’s *your* quirk. I have my own reasons for wanting to be a quirkless hero, but when Shigaraki said that his boss could give me a quirk, there was a moment where I was tempted. If he’d offered it to me a year ago, I might have even said yes. If I had accepted that, do you think my quirk would have been a villain’s quirk?”

Todoroki thought for a moment, “...No. knowing you, whatever it was, you’d find a way to use it for good.”

“But it would have been given to me by villains.” Izuku argued.

“But what matters is...what you do with it…”

“Exactly.” Izuku smiled as Todoroki processed his revelation. “Todoroki, your father might be a villain in disguise, and yeah, maybe you inherited his quirk, but if I had been given a quirk by the league of villains, it would still be my quirk and I could have still used it to become a hero. Your left side is *yours* , not your father’s, Todoroki. Your fire is *your* quirk, not his.” Izuku chucked as Todoroki looked at him in shock. “So you can see why someone like me, who has been kicked down my whole life for not having a quirk might be a *little* upset when someone who has not one, but two amazing quirks holds themselves back simply because they don’t like where they got their power. I’m not saying that you have to use your fire, Todoroki, but I hope that eventually, you can use it for good without even thinking of the man who gave it to you.”

Izuku nodded and walked off to go join the others for lunch, leaving Todoroki propped up against the wall to think about what he had said.

“Hey Kirishima!” Kaminari jogged up to him as they were about to go to lunch. “I need your help with something!”

“What is it man?”

“Well, before the festival, Mineta and I came up with this awesome

plan to trick the girls into wearing cheerleading outfits! We were going to go up to 'em during lunch and tell them it was all Aizawa's idea, but Mineta's still in Recovery Girl's office from how badly he got hurt in the first round and there's no way they'll believe me if I try to pull this off alone. So what do you say? Help a brother out?"

"Kaminari, dude, tricking people isn't manly at all."

"Come on!" Kaminari groaned. "Don't you wanna see those hot babes in those skimpy outfits?"

Kirishima shrugged, "Honestly man, I'm not even sure I'm into girls. Let's just go to lunch and leave the girls alone. Maybe if we eat quickly enough, we'll have time to visit Mineta before the next round."

Hitoshi stood slightly apart from the other finalists as they waited for Midnight to give the instructions for the final round. He'd made it, it felt so surreal! Now all he had to do was win.

"Congratulations to the four teams that made it to the final round." Midnight purred. "Come closer and draw lots to see who you're up against."

"Excuse me!" All eyes turned to Ojiro. "I'd like to withdraw."

"What?!"

Ojiro looked down at the floor, "I barely remember anything from the cavalry battle until the very end of it...I think it was that guy's quirk."

Ojiro glared at Hitoshi, who looked away. He'd been afraid something like this might happen when he brainwashed his own team, he'd been expecting it even, but it still hurt. Why couldn't the guy just accept his place in the tournament and be grateful?

"I was just someone's puppet!" Ojiro continued. "I don't wanna advance if I don't even know how I got here. This is about my pride!"

The Shoda kid from 1B also stepped forward, "I think I should withdraw for the same reason. This isn't how I wanted to get here."

You can't make an omelette without cracking a few eggs. Hitoshi reminded himself. It didn't matter that he had to take advantage of a few people to move on, and he couldn't afford to feel guilty about it.

This was just the price he had to pay to get into the hero course...right?

“How incredibly naive, boys.” Midnight cracked her whip. “It turns me on! You’re out!”

In the end, it was decided that two members from team Tetsutetsu would move on instead. Hopefully they didn’t remember how he’d managed to brainwash them, but then again there was also the possibility each of them would lose their matches and he’d never have to fight them. Either would be fine.

The sixteen of them drew numbers from a box Midnight was holding and Shinso drew number one. Did that mean he’d be going first? Was he ready for this? Who would he be facing?

“Take a look at the bracket, my dears!” Hitoshi looked up at the screen. *Midoriya.* He was going to be facing off against the 10 million point guy? If he’d managed to beat Bakugo and Todoroki in the first round, he probably had an even better quirk than they did, even if he hadn’t shown it off for some reason. Did he just think he was better than everyone else? *Look at me, I don’t even have to use my quirk to beat you* . Hitoshi *hated* guys like that. Oh well, it’d just make it all the more satisfying when he ordered Midoriya to walk out of bounds.

But first, he had to find a way to get under his skin. Getting him to respond right now wouldn’t do any good, since the connection would wear off by the time the match began, but Hitoshi still needed to figure out what Midoriya cared about so he knew what to talk about in the match.

Hitoshi walked up to Midoriya as he was studying the bracket, “That *is* you, right? Izuku Midoriya?”

Midoriya jumped and Hitoshi could tell he recognized him from that time he’d declared war on 1A. Good, that meant he was already off balance, “You excited?”

“Uhh…”

“Not so fast.” Ojiro whipped his tail over Midoriya’s mouth and Hitoshi had to resist the urge to scowl. If tail-boy told Midoriya about his quirk, it’d be that much harder to get him to talk! He reminded himself to stay calm and act like he had all the power. He couldn’t let Midoriya think he had a chance of winning.

So he smiled instead and let out a short laugh before turning and walking away.

Darn it!

Ojiro dragged Izuku to a prep room and Izuku wondered what it was that made people want to drag him places. Seriously, this was the second time today! Hopefully Ojiro didn't drop any bombs on him like Todoroki had, because Izuku was still busy trying to figure out what he was supposed to do with the fact that Endeavor was actually abusive. He shook his head. He couldn't think about that right now, he had to figure out how he was going to beat Shinso.

"What was that about back there, Ojiro?"

Ojiro glanced around the room to make sure no one was listening, "It's about Shinso's quirk. I think it makes him into some sort of puppeteer. All I know is that I wasn't the one calling the shots in the second round."

"His quirk allows him to control other people?" What were the limits to a quirk like that? Could he control people's minds or just their bodies? If he could make people talk he'd be really good at info gathering. That was such a cool quirk and...and he had to fight it, "Can I beat something like that?"

"Yes, by not giving him the chance to use it." Ojiro said. "He asked me a question before the second round, so I think he got into my head when I answered."

"So if I say anything, I'll lose."

Ojiro shrugged, "Even if he gets you, there's still a chance. I woke up when I bumped into someone at the end of the cavalry battle. It's only a guess, but I hope it helps."

Izuku nodded, "Thanks Ojiro, you're a really great guy."

By the time Ojiro left, it was already time for Izuku to grab his weapons and head down to the tunnel to wait for the match. If Shinso were a villain and Izuku had time to prep, he'd wear some sort of watch that would vibrate hard enough to wake him up every thirty seconds or so, but he didn't have time or skills to make something like that right now and even if he did, the only weapons he had approved were a gun and a knife, neither of which would wake him up.

“Hmm, maybe if I hold my knife loosely by the blade,” Izuku muttered, “there’s a chance that my hand might clench around it when he takes control, so that can be a failsafe…”

It’d still be better to just avoid talking though. It shouldn’t be too hard, right? But what if he got caught anyway? What if he couldn’t win?

“Hey kiddo, ya nervous?”

Joke laughed when Izuku jumped a foot in the air, “I’ll take that as a yes. Sorry for scaring you, I just wanted to wish you luck.”

“You didn’t *scare* me.” Izuku denied. “I was just...lost in my own thoughts, I guess.”

Joke nodded, “If my brain was that big, I’d get lost too. But seriously, are you ok?”

Izuku sighed, “It’s just... what happens if I lose?”

“Hmm, I’m not gonna lie kiddo, it happens sometimes.”

Izuku glared at her, “Real helpful, thanks.”

Joke laughed, “I know, but competitions are like that. This is the UA sports festival kiddo, and these students you’re up against are the best of the best. You’ve got to give it your all, but at the end of the day, somebody’s going to lose and that somebody just might be you.”

“But if I lose, then it’ll just be proof that a quirkless kid can never be a hero!”

Joke flicked him on the nose, “Stop that! Whether you go out there and win this or go out there and trip on your own shoelaces, you *are* capable of being a hero. You proved that when you went literally flying into first place during the obstacle course, thanks for the heart attack there by the way, and you proved it again when you held onto your handband minutes longer than anyone expected during the cavalry battle. I’ve been in the stands this whole time, kiddo, and you’ve managed to impress people despite the high expectations they already had for Deku the analyst. So don’t go getting it into your head that no one will believe you can be a hero if you don’t get first place. The only people that are gonna think that after what you did today are the ones that wouldn’t believe you could be a hero no matter how many times you proved yourself. You got that?”

Izuku wiped tears from his eyes, “Yeah, loud and clear.”

“Good.” Joke smiled and ruffled his hair. “Now knock ‘em dead, Deku. I gotta get back to the stands.”

Izuku watched her leave before turning back toward the field. He had already proved that he could be a hero and he had some of the best heroes he’d ever met cheering him on. He could do this!

“Let’s cut to the good stuff, alright?” Mic’s voice echoed over the cheers as Izuku stepped out of the tunnel onto the field. “Please welcome our first fighters! It’s the kid who’s made a name for himself helping heroes, Izuku “Deku” Midoriya from the hero course vs. Shinso Hitoshi from General Education, who really hasn’t done anything to stand out yet!”

“Is everybody ready?” Midnight asked. “Begin!”

Deku vs. Shinso

Chapter Summary

We continue on with the sports festival!

Shinso really was intimidating, wasn't he? From where Izuku was standing, he just looked bored, almost as if he already knew he was going to win. Izuku grabbed the knife from his hip and held it loosely in his left hand, making sure a few of his fingers were touching the blade so it'd cut him if his hand tightened suddenly. Not the best back-up plan, but he didn't know a lot about Shinso's quirk, so it was the best he could do for now.

Shinso scowled at him as Midnight announced the beginning of the match, "Using weapons, huh? It's not enough that you've got that amazing quirk you refused to show us during the other rounds, now you think you can just ignore the rules? I heard recommendation students were entitled, but this is something else."

Izuku opened his mouth to correct him, but slammed it shut again as he remembered he was supposed to stay silent. Shinso was just trying to bait him.

"In a way," Shinso drawled, "this is a test of how strong your spirit is. If you know what you want your future to hold for you, you can't care what other people think. That monkey was going on about his pride earlier, but I just think he's an idiot."

"Don't talk about him that way!" Izuku growled and ran forward before a chill ran through him. He froze and the knife fell to the floor as his hand went completely limp. So much for that idea.

"Heh," Shinso smirked. "I win."

"What's this?!" Mic yelled. "Could this be a quirk at work? Shinso seems to have Midoriya completely stunned!"

Izuku tried to move his fingers, his face, anything, but he obviously wasn't in control anymore. Ugh! Why hadn't he kept his mouth shut?!

"This is the perfect example of why the entrance exam isn't rational." Aizawa said. Izuku felt his heart drop, Eraser was going to be so disappointed in him. He didn't even deserve to be here, did he?

“Since we’re onto the individual rounds, I had some information compiled about our final competitors.” Aizawa continued. “Shinso failed the practical examination to get into the hero course, but he probably knew that would happen, so he applied to general education as well. His quirk is incredibly strong, but since that test consisted of fighting robots, Shinso never stood a chance. Deku himself only managed to get into the hero course because the recommendation exam was slightly different. He wouldn’t have been well suited to fighting robots either, despite the skill we saw from him in previous rounds. This particular match-up was never going to result in a flashy battle.”

“You’re lucky to have been so blessed, Midoriya.” Shinso said. “Now walk out of bounds like a good little hero.”

To his dismay, Izuku obeyed. His brain felt foggy, but he knew that even if he was thinking at full speed, he wouldn’t be able to get out of this. Why had he fallen for it, even after Ojiro warned him? Now no one was ever going to believe he could be a hero!

Wait...that wasn’t quite right, was it? He thought back to his conversation with Joke before the match. She believed in him, as did Brave and Nighteye and Eraserhead. And according to what she’d said, the other heroes believed in him too! He’d shown he was capable of being a hero in the obstacle course and the cavalry battle, but Shinso hadn’t really had a chance to stand out in the same way, had he?

“Even with a quirk like this, I have my own great dreams of becoming a hero.” Shinso said. “So, lose for me.”

Izuku tried one more time to stop walking, but of course that didn’t work. He didn’t understand what Shinso meant about his quirk though, this quirk was perfect for hero work and...it honestly felt kinda cool. Joke was right. In a competition, there was always going to be a winner and loser and this time, it was his turn to lose.

Izuku’s feet stepped over the line.

“Midoriya is out of bounds. Shinso advances to the next match!”

Hitoshi let his control fall. He’d done it. He’d beaten a kid from the hero course! His eyes widened and he took a step back as he realized Midoriya was literally running at him. Oh no, that wasn’t good. Midnight wouldn’t let him be beat up after the match was over right? Or did that not apply to gen-ed students.

Wait, was Midoriya smiling?

“Oh my goodness, that was so cool! I have so many questions! How many people can you control at once? How long can you control them? I wish I had a notebook right now! How complicated can your commands be?”

…what?

“You…you’re not mad?” Hitoshi stared at him in disbelief.

“What? No! Your quirk is just really cool…”

“Deku,” Eraserhead’s voice sounded amused over the speakers, “can you find someplace else to geek out over Shinso’s quirk? We need the field for the next match.”

Midoriya looked up at the announcement booth and gave a full-arm wave, “Sorry Eraser!”

He grabbed Hitoshi by the arm and dragged him back into the student areas. He followed along limply, first because he wasn’t entirely convinced that Midoriya wouldn’t beat him up if he fought back and second because he really didn’t know what was happening. Why was Midoriya so happy? Didn’t he realize that he’d lost?

It wasn’t until they reached one of the prep rooms that Midoirya seemed to realize that kidnapping a classmate probably wasn’t the best thing to do and quickly let go of him, “I am so sorry! I didn’t even realize, I was just really excited and…”

“Why are you acting like this?” Hitoshi snapped. “You’re supposed to be angry with me for brainwashing you and making you lose the match! You should be dragging me away to beat me up, not to…to have a conversation!”

Midoriya tilted his head, “But it’s a competition. You were supposed to try to beat me and you did. Why would I be mad at you for that?”

Hitoshi stared at him, “Because you lost.”

Midoriya shrugged, “I mean, I’m sad I lost, obviously, but between the two of us, I think it’s probably better that you won. The main point of the sports festival is to impress the pros, right? Since I’ve already worked with a lot of pros and did well in the first two rounds, I won’t have any problems getting an internship. You on the other hand, don’t

have any of that. So while I *do* wish I'd made it further in the tournament, I'm glad that you get more chances to show everyone what you can do!"

"You're a weird kid, Midoriya."

"Yeah," Midoriya chuckled nervously, "kinda..."

Hitoshi was quiet for a moment, "So what is your quirk anyway? I think it's strange that someone born with a perfect heroic quirk refused to use it at all in the first two rounds."

Midoriya blinked at him, then started laughing so hard Hitoshi almost wondered that that one hero with the laughter quirk, Ms. Joke, had managed to sneak back here and use her quirk on him. Was Midoriya...making fun of him? And he'd just been starting to think that Midoirya was one of the good ones.

Hitoshi glared at him as he struggled to get himself, "If you don't want to tell me, that's your choice, but it sure is rude to mock me for asking."

"No! It's just," Midoriya gasped, "I'm quirkless!"

"...what?"

Midoriya held his sides as he finally managed to stop laughing, "Yeah. I've got an extra toe joint and everything. Sorry for laughing, I just…"

"No." Hitoshi stared at him in disbelief. "There is no way you are quirkless. How did you even get into the hero course?"

"Well, the practical exam for recommendation students was an obstacle course and I don't know if you noticed," Midoriya smirked, "but I'm pretty darn good at those."

Hitoshi chuckled, "How did a quirkless kid get recommended anyway? Sorry, is that rude to ask?"

Midoriya shrugged, "It's okay. It's kinda a weird situation. I've wanted to be a hero my whole life but, for obvious reasons, nobody really believed in me. Sorry, that probably sounds like I'm looking for pity or something."

"No, I get it." Hitoshi said quickly. "I, uh, get a lot of hate for having a

villain's quirk, so yeah...I can't even imagine what it must be like for you."

"If it means anything, I think your quirk is perfect for heroics." Midoriya said. "But then again, I think any quirk would be good for heroics. If I'd been born with the ability to change my eye-color, I'm pretty sure I still would have found a way to be a hero with it. Anyway, I started analyzing hero fights hoping that it would make up for my lack of quirk. On a whim, I reached out to some underground heroes and offered them some of my analyses and it just kinda snowballed from there. I got really lucky."

"Yeah you did, just not in the way I expected." Hitoshi stopped. "Wait a minute, why were you so worried about getting to the finals if you weren't worried about getting an internship? Are you just super competitive or something?"

Midoriya chuckled and rubbed the back of his neck, "Uh, no. I wanted to prove to everyone that I was able to compete on the same level as the kids with quirks."

"Oh." Hitoshi said eloquently. He'd just blown Midoriya's one chance to prove everyone wrong. "Sorry."

Midoriya shook his head. "Like I said, don't worry about it. If I had to lose to anyone, I'm glad it was to someone like you. With your quirk, I would have lost even if I had a quirk, so nobody will be able to use my loss as proof I shouldn't be a hero. What about you? I'm assuming you're trying for the hero course."

Hitoshi nodded, "I…"

He trailed off as the door to the prep room slammed open and Todoroki, the one with the ice quirk if Hitoshi remembered correctly, stalked in and stood in front of Midoriya.

"You were supposed to win."

Midoriya smiled sheepishly up at him, "Sorry Todoroki. What are you doing here, I thought you had a match?"

"It's already over. It was a fast match, but they're taking a break to finish melting the ice."

Midoriya nodded, "I was wondering why it was so cold."

“Don’t change the subject, Midoriya.” Todoroki seemed to be glaring at Midoriya, but his expression hadn’t changed the whole conversation, so that might just be his natural expression, Hitoshi didn’t know and he felt kinda like an outsider in this conversation. “I was going to beat you.”

“I’m really sorry Todorki. But,” Midoriya smiled brightly and Hitoshi found himself being pushed forward, “this is Shinso! He’s the one who beat me, so you’ll just have to transfer your declaration of war to him instead!”

Oh no, this was *not* what Hitoshi signed up for. Was this Midoriya’s plan? Act all buddy buddy so his guard was down, then recruit the strongest kid in the grade to kill him?

Todoroki looked him up and down, “You’re strong.”

Was…was that a question? Was he supposed to answer? Hitoshi glanced over at Midoriya, who smiled encouragingly. He gulped, then turned back to Todoroki and nodded.

“Good. You’re not the only one with something to prove, so no matter how strong you are, I *will* beat you.”

Hitoshi nodded, because what was he supposed to say to *that* , and Todoroki turned around and walked out of the room.

Midoriya gave him a brilliant smile, “I’d better get going so you can concentrate. Good luck on your next match.”

He followed Todorki out the door and Hitoshi was left gaping at nothing. Had the guy who could freeze their entire grade just declared *war* on him? He almost wished he’d lost to Midoriya, then he wouldn’t have to worry about what he was going to do in his next match.

He was so screwed.

Be the Best

Chapter Summary

Bakugo vs. Uraraka

Chapter Notes

My apologies if you wanted an account of every fight in the sports festival. For the tournament, I'll be showing fights that I think are interesting or that are important for plot and/or character development, but the others will be assumed to go exactly as they did in canon.

Katsuki flexed his hands as he waited for the match to be announced. The Mutt would probably have a few words to say about his behavior in the last round. Whatever, it's not like he actually hurt those 1B losers, and they deserved what they got. What was he supposed to do, just roll over and take it? No, he needed to teach them a lesson. But wasn't that what he'd said about Deku? Ugh! This whole anger management bullshit was confusing.

But it was apparently necessary, since he didn't want to end up like Endeavor. Katsuki was still reeling from the fact that the asshole was apparently secretly abusive. He shouldn't have eavesdropped, but what else was he supposed to do when Icy-Hot insisted on giving declarations of war to *Deku* of all people. He'd just been trying to track 'em down and insist Todoroki give *him* a declaration of war instead, not uncover the scandal of a century.

"He was kinda a hot-shot in middle school, Katsuki Bakugo!" Mic screamed. "Then, the one I'm personally rooting for, Ochako Uraraka!"

Katsuki scoffed, way to be unbiased. Whatever. If people were rooting for Roundface, that was on them, but he was still going to destroy her. She hung around with Deku, which meant she was a loser, but also meant she was probably smart, since Deku wasn't a complete idiot. Besides, his mom had taught him what a force of nature a determined woman could be, so if Roundface was going to give it her all, then so was he.

"If you're going to give up, Roundface, do it now, 'cause I'm not gonna hold anything back."

Uraraka got a determined look on her face, “Giving up isn’t an option for me.”

Katsuki smiled. Good, that meant this would actually be a fight, not a one sided beat-down like he used to give Deku. If he wanted to be the best, he had to beat people who were actually giving it their all. And the Mutt couldn’t even get mad because he had the school’s permission. This was gonna be fun.

“Let the eighth match begin!”

Uraraka ran at him immediately. She was probably going to try floating him out of bounds as fast as she could. An explosion to the face should stop her, though. Hmm, she must be weaker than he thought if she couldn’t even dodge.

A movement caught his eye through the smoke. He should end this quick if Pink-Cheeks wasn’t even going to put up a fight. Just pin her with an explosion like he did to that mist-bastard back at the USJ.

“There’s no way you can beat me!” He pinned her with enough force to give her some pretty nasty burns, but...she wasn’t *that* small, was she? The smoke cleared and he found himself pinning a jacket instead of the person who was supposed to be inside it. Damn, smart move.

But where was she now? If it were him...he’d come up from behind. He turned around and blasted behind him, smirking as Uraraka went flying backward. Apparently she *was* strong enough to be a good opponent, cause that was close.

What followed was like a smoky game of whack-a-mole. Almost as soon as he exploded her, she’d come at him from a different direction, forcing him to counter as she dodged and used the smoke as cover. He’d never had to fight this hard against those extras in middle school. It was fun! She was gonna die, though.

“Hey! If you really want to be a hero, stop acting like a bully!” Katsuki froze momentarily as a voice echoed from the stands and the crowd started booing him. Was he being too harsh on Roundface?

He shook his head as Uraraka forced him to counter with another explosion. No, he knew firsthand what bullying was and this wasn’t like that. Uraraka was forcing him to counter at every turn, so this wasn’t the beat-down it probably looked like from the stands. This was a *fight.*

“Whoever started this uproar should be ashamed.” Katsuki caught his breath as Aizawa started talking. He didn’t think he’d ever heard the hobo sound so passionate. “Bakugo’s fierceness is an acknowledgment of his opponent's strength.”

Heh, so the hobo did know what he was talking about sometimes. For the first time since the fight started, Uraraka stopped coming at him for long enough for the smoke to clear. Even after all that, she still wasn’t dead. This wasn’t over.

She wiped a trace of soot from her cheek, “Thank you, Bakugo, for keeping your eyes focused on me.”

What? What was pink cheeks talking about? Of course he’d been focused on her, he’d had to keep her from touching him? What…

“Release!”

Wait, what was she releasing? She’d never touched him! So what...he glanced around and noticed that the entire arena was suspiciously clear of debris, which meant…Katuski looked up. Shit. He ignored Uraraka running at him as he braced his wrist. This was gonna hurt.

Katsuki had only let loose a few giant explosions in his life, since they always took a while to recover from and he wasn’t known for being patient. But he *had* to blow that rubble to smithereens, there was no other way for him to win! He had to prove he was the best!

The crowd gasped at the sheer size and heat as he vaporized her finishing move. Damn, Roundface had gotten pretty close to beating him there. He turned back to face her at the now tiny rubble fell like hail around them.

“I figured you’d have some stupid plan to beat me.” He growled. “You’re friends with that damn nerd, after all.”

He grinned as Uraraka got to her feet. So she still had some fight in her, good.

“All right, then. Time for us to get serious!”

He ran at her, but stopped when her legs gave out and she fell to the floor. No! It couldn’t end like this! They were just getting started!

Katsuki watched in shock as she tried to crawl forward and keep fighting before finally passing out. That kind of determination…

“Uraraka is unable to continue.” Midnight announced. “Bakugo advances to the next round.”

Katsuki didn’t like the word *brooding* . He always figured there was no point in holding in his rage, since it may as well be everyone’s problem, but that didn’t change the fact that he was brooding as he walked back to the stands after that last match. He didn’t know how he felt about that fight. On the one hand, Uraraka was strong enough that he’d been able to undeniably prove he was the best, on the other...did it have to be Uraraka? Of all the extras in his class, he wasn’t expecting Uraraka to be the one to give him a run for his money. She looked so weak, but she’d still come so close to beating him.

He saw Deku walking down the hall as he climbed the stairs and suddenly everything was clear. It was all Deku’s fault! He was able to come up with a strategy for their class to beat Aizawa, a pro-hero, so that whole meteor-shower bullshit was obviously his idea. Yeah, the principal said he wasn’t really supposed to interact with Deku that much, but it’s not like he was going to beat him up.

“What the hell are you doing here, Deku?”

Deku froze, “Hey, K-katsuki. I was just going to go visit Uraraka in the locker room. See how she was doing, you know? C-congrats on winning your match, s-see you around!”

“It was your idea, wasn’t it?”

Deku turned around, “What?”

“That stupid, desprate plan of hers. Only you would come up with something so…”

“You’re wrong. Uraraka came up with that move all on her own. So if that battle was harder than you thought it’d be, it was because of her strategy, not mine.”

Katsuki growled as Deku walked away and he had to forcefully remind himself why he wasn’t allowed to beat him up. Stop to think, like the Mutt said, that way people didn’t get hurt and he got to stay in UA. It was so annoying.

He got back to the stands just as Cementoss started prepping the arena for the next set of matches.

“Hey Bakugo, playin’ the villain, huh?” Soy-sauce face gave him an annoying smile. “Musta been tough.”

“Even if it was because of who you were up against, you did make a convincing bad guy.” Frog-Face pointed out.

Why hadn’t anyone ever told him that *before* UA? His old teachers always told him his temper was the sign of a great hero, but here everyone just saw him as a villain. So which was fuckin’ true? He wasn’t in the mood to deal with this.

“Shut up, you idiots, or else!”

“I don’t know how you were able to aim a powerful blast at a frail girl like that.” Dunce-Face said.

These idiots, didn’t they realize just how close Uraraka came to beating him? And he was *strong* , so someone who almost beat him definitely couldn’t be called *weak* . He sat down and looked out over the arena so he wouldn’t be tempted to blow up any of his classmates.

“There’s nothing frail about that girl.”

Hot and Cold

Chapter Summary

The second round of the sports festival begins!

Izuku paused with his hand on the door to the locker room. It sounded like Uraraka was talking to someone, maybe on the phone. It'd taken him a bit longer to reach it than he'd planned because of that whole thing with Katsuki, and he didn't want to intrude…

"I failed."

What? Just because she lost didn't mean she failed! She held her own against Katsuki and almost won! She'd even managed to put Katsuki on edge, which Izuku hadn't ever seen before. She was amazing, so why did she think she failed?

"I know…I just wish I'd gotten more chances to show what I was made of."

Maybe he should leave and come back later? But it sounded like Uraraka was crying, he didn't want to leave her alone!

"Thanks Dad. Love you, bye."

Izuku hesitated another moment before knocking on the door and pushing it open, "Umm, Uraraka, are you ok?"

Uraraka frantically wiped her cheeks, "Oh hi Deku. What're you doing back here?"

"I just wanted to make sure you're alright. Katsuki can be pretty brutal."

She smiled shakily, "Recovery girl fixed me right up, so I just have a few scratches!"

Izuku sat down beside her, "You don't have to be ok, you know. We're all here to prove ourselves, so it's understandable to be frustrated that you lost.

Uraraka stared at him for a moment before tears started running down her cheeks again, "It's just, I didn't realize how powerful Bakugo was. He wiped the floor with me!"

Izuku didn't really know what to do. He wanted to comfort her, but...what were you supposed to do when a girl was crying? He resisted the urge to text Joke for advice, since she'd probably just laugh at him, then yell at him for texting rather than being there for his friend. He was on his own for this. What had his mom done when he was crying? Hugs! Hugs were good.

He hesitantly reached out and pulled her gently to his chest, then wrapped his arms around her. She sobbed harder, but didn't pull away, so he guessed he hadn't ruined the friendship yet, "You did really well. That meteor shower was a really cool idea."

Uraraka sniffed and looked up at him, "You really think so?"

Izuku nodded, "It was really smart. You managed to keep Katsuki on the defensive the whole fight, which is pretty much impossible. Even then, you only lost because you ran out of stamina at the end and now you know what to work on!"

Uraraka sniffed and nodded, "You're right! This just shows me how much harder I need to work! How are you doing? I know you didn't really get the chance to show what you could do."

Izuku shrugged, "It was just the nature of Shinso's brainwashing. I'm just lucky that I got to shine in the other rounds."

"You probably think I'm a mess." Uraraka pulled away. "Here I am crying my eyes out and acting like it's the end of the world that I lost. You lost too and you're not even upset."

"No!" Why did he miss the feeling of her leaning up against him? He must still be wanting to comfort her, that was it. "Just because I'm not upset doesn't mean you don't have the right to be. And I am sad about losing, it's just that I know I already have connections, so it's not the end of the world, not that it is for you! It's just...I'm just gonna leave now."

Uraraka giggled, "It's fine Deku. It's probably time to get back to the stands anyway. Don't wanna miss Todoroki's match, you know?"

Izuku nodded, "Just...I'm here for you Uraraka, if you ever need it."

Uraraka smiled, "Thanks Deku, I'll be sure to take you up on that."

"This guy won his last match by a landslide and literally left half the

audience frozen! From the hero course, Shoto Todoroki! And this kid managed to take out his last opponent without even touching him! The dark horse from the general course, Hitoshi Shinso!"

Shouto didn't know much about Shinso, but he was strong enough to decisively defeat Midoriya, so he needed to be careful. His quirk allowed him to brainwash his opponent, but when he'd asked Midoriya about how it was activated, he'd simply smiled cryptically and wished him luck. He supposed it made sense, He'd declared war on Midoriya so helping him wouldn't be in line with the spirit of true competition. Still, it was annoying going in blind. It'd be better to not give him the chance to use it, which meant freezing him right from the beginning, like he had with Sero.

"So, you're Endeavor's son." Shinso drawled. "Must be nice having such a famous old man. Funny, though, how your quirks seem to be complete opposites. What's up with that?"

Shouto glared at him, but didn't respond. He was just another person who thought he was lucky to have Endeavor as a father, nothing new there. Besides, the match hadn't started, so he didn't have an excuse to freeze him. Yet.

"What? You've got this amazing quirk and you don't even care where you got it?"

No, because it was *his* quirk, just like Midoriya had said. It didn't matter where he got it, because he chose what to do with it.

"Begin!"

Shouto didn't waste any time freezing Shinso in a miniature glacier. It wasn't as large as the one he'd used on Sero, but it was more than enough to encase Shinso from the neck down. He'd won.

"Shinso," Midnight asked, "can you move at all?"

Shinso smirked, "I can still run my mouth, can't I?"

Shouto raised an eyebrow, "You can't win by…"

A chill passed over him and he wondered if this was how it felt to be encased in one of his glaciers. What was going on? Was this Shinso's quirk? It must be voice activated.

"What!?" Mic's scream echoed through the stadium. "In an interesting

reversal, both Shinso *and* Todoroki appear to be completely frozen! If it wasn't for Kirishima and Tetsutetsu's fight last round, I'd say this is the closest to a tie I've ever seen in the sports festival! What'll happen next!?"

"Turn around and walk out of bounds." Shinso shivered.

Even though he was expecting it, Shouto was still shocked when he obeyed. How was he going to get out of this? Was there a way around the quirk? Midoriya hadn't been able to find a way but...wait, at the beginning of the match, he'd been holding a knife by the blade...so maybe pain had something to do with it?

"What are you doing Shouto!?" He felt bad for the people sitting around his father. He knew from experience how hot his father's fire got when he was angry. "Snap out of it!"

Shouto was tempted to lose just to spite his father, but in the end, this fight had nothing to do with that bastard. He was going to win this, not to please his father or to spite him, but because he wanted to be a hero. He hadn't gotten the chance to beat Midoiriya, so he refused to lose to Shinso!

If the secret to breaking the brainwashing was pain, he knew how to win. Even if he couldn't stop himself from obeying Shinso's orders, he probably still had enough control to activate his quirk and lower his body temperature. For the first time in his life, Shouto was grateful for the hypothermic effect of his quirk.

He was only a few steps away from the line, he was running out of time. Shouto grimaced internally as he pushed his quirk far enough for frost to start forming on his arm. He had to get colder!

His foot was raised to take the final step when he finally shivered. He activated his left side to warm him up as he set his foot down inside of the line, for once not caring that he was visibly using his fire in the middle of a fight.

"How!?" There was a note of panic in Shinso's voice before he got himself under control. "Oh, and here I was thinking you were the family disappointment for not getting a fire quirk. Is your dad proud? Or is he the one who wouldn't let you use your fire? How does it feel.."

Shouto put his hand over Shinso's mouth and covered it in a layer of ice. He wasn't going to fall for his brainwashing again, it'd been hard

enough to break the first time. He stepped away from Shinso as Midnight approached them.

“Shinso, can you move at all? One blink for yes, two blinks for no.”

Shinso’s eyes watered as he blinked twice.

“Shinso is immobilized. Todoroki advances to the next round!”

Shouto immediately put his left hand on Shinso’s shoulder and began melting him out of the ice. His win was a testament to how painful hypothermia was, “It’s clear how you managed to defeat Midoriya so easily. Good match.”

Shinso shivered as he was finally able to pry himself from the ice, “H-how did you b-break my hold?”

“I was still able to activate my quirk, even if you had control of my limbs. I gave myself hypothermia.”

Shinso stared at him as some robots came over to lead him to Recovery Girl, “Impressive.”

“Thank you. I look forward to fighting you again.”

Shinso nodded and followed the robots as Shouto went back to the student areas through the opposite tunnel.

“I’m glad you’re finally seeing reason, Shouto.” Endeavor was leaning against one of the walls. He must have left the stands as soon as the match was over. “Now that you’ve publically abandoned your childish rebellion, we can get back to what’s important. I’ll lead you down the path of the mighty, Shouto.”

Of course his father would see him use his fire and think he was content being his masterpiece, “You’re a fool to think my feelings could be so easily reversed. Instead, for that one moment, I forgot all about you.” He refused to meet his father’s eye as he walked past him and left him in the darkness, “Whether that’s good or bad, I don’t know, but it’s beginning to look like maybe I don’t need you.”

Decisive Matches

Chapter Summary

Bakugo vs. Kirishima; the semi-finals.

Icy-hot had managed to beat that purple fucker, which honestly didn't surprise Katsuki that much. Yeah, Eye-bags had beaten Deku, but Deku was a quirkless weakling so that didn't count for much. What *really* surprised him, though, was that Icy-hot had used his fire in the fight, even if it was just to warm himself up.

It pissed him off. The guy refuses to use his fire all year, didn't even use it at the USJ and then, what? He has one conversation with Deku and he's cured? Did Icy-hot think Deku was better than him or something? Did he use his fire against Eye-bags just because he'd been the one to beat Deku?

Whatever, it was better that Icy-hot was at full strength because when Katsuki beat him, no one would be able to deny he was the best. If he beat the bastard when he was still only using his ice all those heroes in the audience would think that if they fought all out, Icy-hot would win. So really, he should be thanking Deku, not that he was going to.

But before he could beat Icy-hot, he had to beat Shitty Hair, who he definitely *wasn't* friends with, no matter what the Mutt said. The problem was that Kirishima could easily withstand his explosions, which was annoying. If he wasn't the best, he would have wished he had some way to cancel Kirishima's quirk like Aizawa could, but he was the best, so he'd beat him anyway. At least Kirishima wouldn't be trying to crush him with falling rocks like Roundface had.

"He's rock hard and surprisingly good at arm wrestling! Eijiro Kirishima! His opponent is known for his explosive personality and for not underestimating women! Katsuki Bakugo!"

Katsuki cracked his neck. This would be a fun challenge. Shitty Hair ran at him with a smile and launched a hardened fist at his head. What the hell? Where was the super nice, kinda annoying, kid who wouldn't leave him alone? This guy was willing to do whatever it took to win. Good, they had something in common.

An explosion right now wouldn't do any good because Kirishima had hardened his whole body, so Katsuki settled for dodging. Kirishima

responded with another punch. Hmm, he seemed to be trying to end this fight quickly, which shouldn't be the case, considering the point of this whole thing was to show off for the pros. Wait, how many times had he seen Kirishima harden his whole body? There were definitely a few times, like at the USJ, but he never kept completely hardened for long and he normally prefered to harden just one part at a time.

Katsuki dodged again and thought back to his last match. The only reason Roundface had lost was because she'd overused her quirk, so maybe the same tactic would work on Shitty Hair. Katsuki didn't need to blow up solid rock, he just needed to wait until Kirishima exhausted himself, then go for the kill. It was going to be a war of attrition.

For the next few minutes, Katsuki was on the defensive, which probably looked bad to the pros, but as long as he won, they'd still know that he was still the best. Occasionally he'd hit Kirishima with an explosion to the ribs to test if he was getting softer, but so far he wasn't. Maybe he'd have to reevaluate his strategy, he was starting to get tired.

Kirishima launched another punch at his face which Katsuki wasn't quite fast enough to dodge and he was left with a long scratch on his cheek and the next explosion told him that Kirishima was still as hard as ever. Damn, Shitty Hair was strong. Katsuki dodged for another few minutes before hitting Kirishima with another explosion. He winced and grunted and Katsuki smiled. Time to die.

"You've been trying to keep rock hard this whole fight, right Kirishima? That means you're overusing your quirk, and sooner or later, you'll fall apart!"

He ended his sentence with a massive explosion. Kirishima still had enough juice in him that it probably wouldn't take him down, but it would give Katsuki another opening. He didn't wait for the smoke to clear before letting off another big explosion to Kirishima's face, then another, then another. Shitty Hair had had his chance to shine at the beginning of the fight, now it was Katsuki's turn.

Now that Shitty Hair was tired, it only took 30 seconds of continuous explosions to knock him out. Yeah, he could see why Kirishima had been trying to avoid a drawn out match with him, but too bad. Katuski had been in control since the beginning of the fight, Shitty Hair just hadn't known it.

“Kirishima has been knocked out!” Midnight announced. “Bakugo advances to the next round!”

Izuku didn’t know why he’d been worried about Katsuki, of course he’d win, he was amazing. But still, Kirishima had put up a good fight, and he could see from Katsuki’s face that Kirishima had clearly impressed him. As far as Izuku could tell, there were only a few things that Katsuki cared about, but strength and being the best were some of them. He even let Kirishima hang around him without beating him up, which meant he’d impressed him before at some point or another, maybe even at the USJ.

Well, they had their final four. Izuku was kinda sad that Shinso had lost to Todoroki, but he’d definitely put up a good fight. As fast as the fight had been, it had kept Izuku on the edge of his seat. The fact that someone could still activate their quirk under Shinso’s brainwashing was something they could use if he got into the hero course. Yeah, the rules for a sports festival transfer were mostly unknown and highly subjective, but he knew there was no way Shinso hadn’t impressed Aizawa, so he was holding out hope for a new classmate.

And Todoroki had used his fire! Sure, that didn’t erase the trauma that had led him to ignoring his left side in the first place, but it was progress! Izuku was so proud of him but...he wished he was more surprised that Endeavor was abusive. After Katsuki though, he supposed abuse was a side effect of the system. All the more reason for a quirkless hero to come in and change things. Hmm, would Nedzu help...

Present Mic announced the next match between Todoroki and Iida. It was so hard when his friends faced each other because he didn’t know who to root for! Todoroki started off with an ice attack, obviously. Izuku didn’t know how he’d use his fire against a fast opponent like Iida, or how much control he had over that side of his quirk, but it was better to use ice to fence him in like he was doing.

It looked like Todoroki was going to win. There was literally nowhere left for Iida to run. Just then, Iida jumped completely over the ice. Could he use his quirk to help him jump or were his legs just naturally that powerful? Was there a way to use his quirks to enhance his jumps? That would be super useful in a fight on uneven terrain!

He watched as the flames from Iida’s engines turned blue. He was using that finishing move that he’d used in the cavalry battle. Risky,

but against an opponent like Todoroki who could limit his mobility, he probably didn't have any other options. The kick was too fast for Todoroki to dodge, which meant that Iida was the first to seriously land a hit on him in the entire festival.

Iida grabbed Todoroki by the shirt and moved to throw him out of bounds when his engines stalled. Was that an effect of his recipro-burst or had Todoroki done something? Either way, it was the end of the match. As soon as Iida stopped running, Todoroki encased him completely in ice.

"Iida is immobilized, Todoroki advances to the next round!"

"Poor Iida." Uraraka said.

Izuku nodded, "He was really looking forward to telling his brother he won."

"Oh, is his brother not watching?"

"No, Iida said he was on a mission." Izuku said. "But I hope Ingenium will be proud of him for getting this far. His brother is super important to him."

"What are you doing up, Shitty Hair? Didn't I knock you out?"

Kirishima laughed, "I wanted to wish you luck on your next match Bakugo!"

"I don't need luck," Katsuki huffed, "I'm the best."

Kirishima gave him a bright smile, "Don't I know it. By the way, you were super manly during our fight. It was super smart of you to wait for me to get tired before attacking."

Kirishima sure had a weird way of giving compliments, didn't he? He acted like manly was the highest praise anyone could get, even the girls. Katsuki didn't necessarily aspire to be manly above all else, but...coming from Kirishima, it was pretty impressive. Not that he'd let Shitty Hair know that.

"Tch," Katsuki turned away, "even an idiot could see that was the best strategy."

Kirishima laughed again, loud and happy. Katsuki bet that Kirishima never had to go to stupid therapy for anything, much less for anger

management. All the more reason he should keep his distance from these extras. If Kirishima knew he went to therapy, there was no way he'd think Katsuki was manly.

"Well," Kirishima shrugged, "I'd better let you prep. You're up against Tokoyami next, right?"

Katsuki nodded and Kirishima went to leave, "Wait."

Kirishima turned back to him and Katsuki scowled, why had he kept Shitty Hair from leaving? The conversation was over!

"Good work in the last match." he said finally. "It was pretty...manly of you."

Kirishima grinned, "Thanks man! Win your next match for me, ok?"

He left and Katsuki stared accusingly at the empty prep room. What had gotten into him?

"Why isn't Tokoyami attacking harder?" Ashido whined. "He didn't hold back like this when he was against us!"

"It must be all the light." Uraraka muttered. "Dark Shadow can't go on the offensive."

"Yeah," Izuku said, "this match up really couldn't be any worse for him. But there's always the chance that Katsuki hasn't figured out Tokoyami's weakness yet."

Just as he said that, the field was engulfed in a bright explosion and the air got so thick with smoke that no one could see Katsuki or Tokoyami.

"If he's smart, Tokoyami will use the smoke as a kind of darkness to recharge dark shadow…" Izuku muttered, "Oh...Nevermind."

The smoke cleared and Katuski was pinning Tokoyami to the ground with one hand and making continuous small explosions with the other. Dark shadow had shrunk to a fraction of his size and appeared to be crying, so it didn't surprise Izuku at all when Midnight announced Tokoyami's surrender.

"Alright everyone! Stay tuned for the finale!" Mic screamed. "Bakugo vs. Todoroki!"

Fire

Chapter Summary

Bakugo vs. Todoroki

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Katsuki was on his way to his prep room when Endeavor found him.

“Bakugo, correct? Your power is pretty impressive. Of all his classmates, I believe you’re the one closest to my Shouto in terms of power.”

Katsuki scoffed, “Obviously. If I wasn’t the best, I wouldn’t have made it to the final round.”

“True. It is my Shouto’s duty, however, to surpass even All Might. His fight with you will be a good test for how much training he has left. Don’t disgrace yourself or him by holding back.”

What was up with this guy? It was one thing to want to be the best, Katsuki understood that better than most, but to use your kid to try to prove that? That was a weak-ass move. If Endeavor wanted to be the best, then he had to do it himself, not force Todoroki to do it for him. And what made him think Katsuki would even *think* about holding back? He didn’t even hold back against *Uraraka!*

Katsuki made eye contact with Endeavor, “You’re a grade-A asshole, you know that?”

The flames on Endeavor’s face grew hotter and his eyes widened in rage, “Excuse me?”

“You wanna be better than All Might, I can respect that, but Todoroki isn’t you. If he beats All Might, that doesn’t say shit about you. And you know what, I’m glad he’s using his fuckin’ fire now because I’m going to prove that *I’m* the strongest, you got that?”

“Why you insolent…”

Katsuki didn’t wait around for Endeavor to say anything else. If the Mutt were here, he’d probably give Katsuki an earful about thinking

before you talk back to the number two hero, but he couldn't bring himself to regret it. The bastard deserved it.

He didn't bother checking the number of the prep room before barging in. He knew his way around and if some extras were busy hanging around in *his* room, they were just asking to be kicked out. Unfortunately, it wasn't an extra in the room.

It was Todoroki.

"What are *you* doing here, Icy-Hot? This is my room to…"

Katsuki glanced at the door. Crap. Well, whatever, he was here, so he might as well take advantage of it. If Icy-Hot wasn't going to declare war on him, then he was going to declare war on Icy-Hot.

"Alright, so I may have walked into the wrong room, but don't think I'm not going to be on the top of my game." He let loose a small explosion on the table in front of Todoroki. That'd always worked to intimidate Deku. "You better bring all you got to this, Icy-Hot!"

Icy-Hot didn't even react, "Midoriya."

Katsuki grit his teeth. *He* was the one declaring war on Icy-Hot! Who did that fuckin' nerd think he was?

"What does Deku have to do with this? I'm the one you need to fight! That nerd didn't even get beyond the first round!"

Todoroki stared at his hands, "He told me the same thing, that I shouldn't hold myself back, even though he didn't have to. You've known him longer, has he always been so helpful?"

Yeah, the nerd had always been fuckin' helpful. Too helpful, always looking down on Katsuki like he fuckin' needed his help. He didn't! He was stronger than some stupid, quirkless Deku! He deserved Todoroki's flames more than that bastard did!

"This fight is between you and me now! Focus on the match, Icy-Hot, that's the only thing I give a damn about! Whatever your family problems are, whatever you're feeling," Katsuki spit, "don't you dare hold back! Use your flames on *me* ! I want everyone to know I beat you at your best!"

With that he stalked out of the room and slammed the door. He'd...probably gone too far, honestly. It wasn't his fault Deku made

him so angry! Whatever, Icy-Hot could take it, and if it got him to use his flames during their fight, it was worth it. He was going to show the world what a champion *really* looked like!

"Is everybody ready!?!?" Mic screamed. "You already know our finalists, so it all comes down to this! Shouto Todoroki vs. Katsuki Bakugo! Begin!"

Shouto wasn't about to underestimate Bakugo, so he started the fight with an ice wave. If he could bury him completely in ice then…

He couldn't see Bakugo anymore. Had he done it? Was the fight already over? No. The glacier started shaking as muffled booms sounded from inside, Bakugo was still kicking. Suddenly a portion of the ice cracked and shattered as Bakugo finished tunnelling through. Shouto jumped back. So, he wasn't going to be able to bury Bakugo like he had his first two opponents, that was fine. He had other moves in his arsenal.

"You've got some powerful attacks, Icy-Hot, but they're not going to be enough to beat me!"

Bakugo ran at him and jumped, but right as Shouto went to freeze him, he used an explosion to change his trajectory and land on Shouto's left. Was he targeting his left side deliberately like Midoriya had done in the cavalry battle?

"Are you underestimating me?!" Bakugo grabbed onto the collar of Shouto's uniform and used an explosion to try and launch him out of bounds, forcing Shouto to create an ice wall to prevent himself from crossing the line. Yes, Bakugo was powerful, but Shouto already knew that coming into the fight.

Bakugo reached to attack his left again, this time with an explosion at the ready. He could hear his father screaming at him to use his left side, but he didn't. Instead he grabbed Bakugo's forearm and used his own momentum to try and toss him out of bounds. Bakugo, of course, managed to switch his trajectory at the last minute to land inside the line.

"Stop screwing around." Bakugo growled. "What? Do you think I'm not worthy of your fire? I need to prove that I'm the best student at the sports festival, but that's only possible if you come at me with everything you've got! Show everyone you're trying to destroy me!"

He should use his fire. If he didn't, there's no guarantee he'd win. Midoriya was right, it was his quirk, not his father's. Shouto had even managed to forget about his father when he used his fire in the fight with Shinso, which he hadn't even thought possible. But…had that been the right thing to do? What did his left side even mean to him after all these years of rejecting it?

"Don't give up Todoroki!" Shouto flinched as Midoriya's voice echoed in the nearly silent stadium. "Do your best!"

Do your best . That's right. Shouto was here to be the best hero he could possibly be, so why shouldn't he use *his* quirk? Steam rose off him as the frost evaporated and his left side burst into flames. Bakugo grinned and launched himself forward, using his explosions to rotate his body so he was spinning like a bullet.

"Yes, Shouto!" He didn't know what it was about his father's voice that cut through even the sound of Bakugo's explosions, but as soon as he heard it, it was the only thing he could focus on. "Use the power *I* gave you!"

In every memory I have of my mother, she's crying.

He…he couldn't. Shouto couldn't…that power had made his mother's life a living hell, had been what doomed him to his father's torture, he…

Shouto let his arm fall as the flames died out. Wait, wasn't there something he was supposed to be doing right now?

"Howitzer Impact!"

Oh, that's right. Bakugo.

"Whoa!" Mic screamed. "Bakugo combined speed and rotation with a huge blast like the one he used against Uraraka, turning himself into a human missile! But Shouto didn't end up firing off that flame attack he'd been preparing, so what's become of our two competitors!"

That *asshole* ! Katsuki had been so close to proving that he was the strongest, only for Todoroki to abandon his fire at the literal last second! Icy-Hot had better be fuckin' okay so that Bakugo could beat him at full power! Katsuki waited for the smoke to clear, only to see ruined ice in every direction and Todoroki sprawled out on one of the glaciers on the wrong side of the line.

“Todoroki is out of bounds,” Midnight announced, “Bakugo wins!”

No! Not like this! Katsuki dragged himself to his feet and rushed toward Todoroki, his energy returning with every step. No! He hadn’t gotten to prove he was the best! He needed to show how strong he was! It couldn’t end like this!

He reached Todoroki and grabbed him by the front of his shirt, not caring that Todoroki was limp in his hold. The bastard must be faking unconsciousness, because there was no way he was allowed to pass out without giving Katsuki the fight he deserved!

“Stop messing around!” He screamed. “This isn’t a real win for me unless you try harder! Now get the fuck up!”

The air started smelling sweet, but it wasn’t the familiar scent of his quirk that Katsuki was used to. He was starting to get light headed, “Don’t…”

Midnight took a step forward to make sure that Bakugo was really asleep, then nodded up at the announcer’s booth.

“Well there you have it, ladies and gentlemen!” Mic yelled. “The winner of this year’s sports festival is...Katsuki Bakugo!!!”

Chapter End Notes

> I made a discord for my bnha writing! Feel free to check it out and scream at me, but a warning that I'm still pretty new to discord, so you'll have to be patient with me!

The Best

Chapter Summary

The medal ceremony.

Katsuki woke up with a headache and immedately sat bolt upright as he remembered what had happened in his last match, “Fuck! Shit! That fucking bastard!”

He looked around to see he was in a plain cement room which was empty except for Midnight and Recovery girl, who were looking at him warily.

“Good Morning, dearie.” Recovery Girl said. “You’d better get up, the medal ceremony will be starting soon.”

“No.” Katsuki growled. “I’m not going.”

“What do you mean you’re not going?” Midnight sighed. “You won the sports festival, you *have* to go.”

“I didn’t win shit! Now get Icy-Hot in here, I need a rematch!”

“You won fair and square, dearie, I really don’t know why…”

Before he knew it, he was in Recovery Girl’s face with explosions popping in each hand, “Get his ass in here or I’ll…”

He didn’t even see Midnight move before he got lightheaded again. He was really starting to hate the smell of that fucking quirk.

When he woke up again, Midnight and Recovery Girl were gone, but Hound Dog was sitting on a crate on the other side of the room.

“What are you doing here, you mutt? I thought I told you idiots I want a rematch with Icy-Hot!”

Hound Dog sighed, “Yeah, that’s what they said you wanted, but that’s not how life works, brat.”

“Then *make* it work!” Katsuki screamed. “I didn’t win! I *didn’t* !”

“Yeah, you did.” Hound Dog said. “And the sooner you get that

through that thick skull of yours, the sooner we can get to what's actually making you mad."

"Oh yeah?" Katsuki scoffed. "And what the fuck is that?"

Hound Dog fixed him with an intense stare, "Why don't you tell me? What was it about that fight that pressed every single button you've got? Cause I've never seen you this worked up before and your anger is my *job."*

"Tch," Katsuki scowled, "the win doesn't count. He was holding back."

"Hmm, it's his right to hold back if he wants to, isn't it? Why does it bother you so much?"

"Because he wasn't giving it his all!" Katsuki yelled. "He wasn't giving it his all and I was, so now everyone's gonna think he's stronger and the only reason I won was because he wasn't taking things seriously!"

"I don't think that."

Katsuki paused, "What?"

"I think you won because you're strong and have brilliant technique. You don't have to believe me if you don't want to, but that's what I think. And I know I'm not the only one."

Katsuki huffed and turned away, "Whatever."

"I mean, we're definitely going to have to talk about this later. I didn't know feeling inferior was such a huge issue for you, so we're gonna come back to that, but…"

"I don't feel inferior!" Katsuki snapped. "I'm the best! I've always been the best and I'll always be the best!"

Hound Dog looked at him sadly, "Yeah, I don't know how your old teachers ever thought giving you all that pressure was a good idea. You've always been the best, Bakugo, but the thing is that you've been told your whole life that if you're not the best, then you're worthless, which isn't true. Everybody fails sometimes, Bakugo, but that doesn't mean that everybody is a useless waste of space. We learn from our failures and we even learn from those who are better than us. That doesn't make us terrible people and it doesn't mean we're not strong."

Katsuki stared down at the floor and Hound Dog sighed, "You don't

believe me, that's fine, but I want you to think about it, okay? It's gonna take a lot of work, but I personally don't have any trouble believing that you can do it. Now, let's go, it's time for the medal ceremony to start."

Katsuki glared at him, "I don't want to get a medal that doesn't mean shit."

Hound Dog sighed, "We all have to do things we don't want to do, Bakugo. You don't have to like it, you don't have to accept it, hell, you can even flip All Might off when he goes to give it to you if you want, I don't care, but technically, you won first place in the sports festival, so you've got to go stand up there on the podium and let people cheer for you. Deal?"

Katsuki scoffed, but stood and followed Hound Dog out the door. Midnight and Cementoss were already waiting on the other side along with Todoroki and Tokoyami, though Iida was nowhere to be seen. Cementoss was sculpting a cement podium on some kind of lift and Midnight was messing around with some chain and muzzle combo. Why was she so weird?

Midnight looked up as they walked in and she blinked a few times in shock, "How did you get him to calm down?"

"What are the chains for?" Katsuki asked.

The Mutt laughed, "That was the original plan to make you attend the ceremony. I insisted I get the chance to try and talk you down first."

Katsuki looked between Hound Dog and Midnight, who looked sheepish, "What the fuck?"

"Well, since you're here now, we can finally begin." Cementoss said. "Midnight, you go on up, boys, take your places. Everyone's waiting."

Shouta watched the podium rise from the floor and was surprised that Bakugo was actually standing in first place. Sure, he was glaring at everyone, but considering that Midnight had said he'd tried to attack them when he woke up, glaring was much better than Shouta had expected. He'd had his doubts after Bakugo's behavior, both in the cavalry battle and his battle with Todoroki, but maybe Hound Dog actually *was* managing to get through to him.

"Tenya Iida actually shares third place with Tokoyami." Midnight

announced. “But he had to leave early for a family emergency. Gotta love those familial bonds!”

Shouta sighed. Midnight was inappropriate as always. And a family emergency was a serious understatement. He hadn’t been told exactly what had happened, just that Tensei was in the hospital after a villain attack, but...hopefully he’d be alright. Heroism was dangerous, but heroes did get injured frequently and most of the time it wasn’t too serious. Shouta hoped that was the case this time, if only for Iida's sake.

“There’s only one hero worthy of giving out these medals! All Might, the number one hero!”

Shouta sighed at All Might’s overly dramatic entrance. Did the man have to do a flip in time with his own theme music when he couldn’t even go a day without coughing up blood? This was why Shouta was an underground hero.

All Might took the third place medal from Midnight and put it around Tokokami’s neck, “Young Tokoyami, congratulations. You showed great strength out there!”

Then All Might moved onto Todoroki. Shouta knew Endeavor probably didn’t agree, but he was proud of everything Todoroki had accomplished. He’d been talking to the other teachers since the beginning of the school year to try and figure out a way to bring out Todoroki’s fire, but he’d managed to overcome it on his own, if only in a small way. It was progress and a development that Shouta fully planned on nurturing.

All Might placed the medal around his neck, “I’m assuming there was a reason you didn’t use your fire, though it cost you the match.”

Todoroki looked down at his medal and Shouta couldn’t hear what his reply was, since unlike the teachers, the students weren’t mic'd. He’d have to stomach his distaste for All Might and ask him what Todoroki said later. Anything to help his students.

Then All Might turned to Bakugo and Shouta leaned forward. This would be the moment of truth. Would Bakugo actually accept the medal or would he try to attack All Might?

As it turned out, Bakugo did neither of those things. As All Might reached forward to place the medal around his neck, Bakugo reached up and grabbed the medal out of his hands, then kept it clutched in

his fist as he dropped his hand to his side. A simple, but powerful, statement that he didn't fully accept his win. Interesting. So Hound Dog apparently hadn't tried to convince him that his win meant something, just tamed the initial anger. It would be interesting to see how that worked long term. Hopefully Bakugo could control himself enough that Shouta wouldn't have to separate him and Todoroki during combat exercises.

"Here they are!" All Might boomed. "The winners of this year's sports festival!"

Finally! That'd been exhausting, even more exhausting than the sports festival usually was. He'd be sure to *not* let Mic talk him into commentating ever again. Oh well, time to go talk to his students.

"Why do we even have to come back to class?" Mineta whined. "Can't they just let us go home after the sports festival? I want to talk to all the hot babes I impressed!"

"What hot babes?" Sero laughed. "The ones that stopped watching before the end of the first round?"

Izuku shook his head as the class took their seats and joked around. It's not like they were actually going to have a lesson or anything, they just needed to wait for Aizawa to officially release them. Everyone had done really well and Izuku had seen so many creative uses for everyone's quirks. They still had a long way to go before they could really call themselves pro-heroes, but Izuku thought they were well on their way.

The class went silent as Aizawa walked through the door. Nobody wanted a repeat of one of his *don't waste my time* lectures. Izuku sat up a little straighter. Sure, he didn't *think* Eraser would be disappointed with him for getting eliminated so early, but...he couldn't be certain.

"Nice work." Aizawa said. "You have the next two days of school off to recuperate. I'm sure the pros who watched the festival will want to recruit some of you, but we'll talk about the draft when you get back, so don't worry about that now. Get some rest, you still have a lot of training."

There was a rush for the door, but Izuku decided he wasn't in any hurry. When he finished gathering his things, he stood and smiled at Aizawa, "Good job commentating. You could tell your heart was really in it."

Aizawa snorted, “Yeah, sure problem child, just like All Might’s power is in his brain.”

Izuku rolled his eyes, “Yep. Smartest hero on earth.”

Aizawa smiled at him, “You did good problem child.”

Izuku frowned and scuffed at the floor with his foot, “I didn’t make it very far, though.”

“You made it farther than Mineta.”

Izuku snorted, “Everyone made it farther than Mineta.”

Aizawa smirked, “Your point?”

Izuku smiled, but let it fall too quickly, “I’m sorry. I know that I didn’t need to win because I have connections already, but I probably disappointed you and…”

“Hey.” Aizawa grabbed his shoulders and turned Izuku to face him, “You did amazing. Everyone was impressed with your quick thinking and Emi said that a ton of people were gobsmacked that a quirkless kid could even get beyond the first round, so don’t you think that you disappointed me, because you didn’t.”

“B-but you spent all this time training me…”

Aizawa nodded, “Yes, and look how far you’ve come. Or do you not remember our first practice when you couldn’t even throw a punch? Or that time when Emi took you out and you fell into three dumpsters in under two hours? Now listen closely because I’m only going to say this once. I am proud of you. Now get going before your mom starts calling me asking where you are.”

Izuku wiped the tears from his eyes and nodded, “Thanks, Eraser.”

“Anytime, problem child.” Aizawa said.

“So…” Izuku smiled mischievously, “Emi, huh?”

Aizawa groaned, “Don’t you even start.”

Bored

Chapter Summary

Izuku tries to figure out what to do with himself until UA starts again in two days.

Chapter Notes

Now featuring 500% more made up statistics!

Izuku was getting restless. Aizawa had told them to use these two days off school to rest, but...he'd already done that! He'd slept in until 11 that morning and spent a few hours watching the news but now he was bored. And what made it worse was that since the heroes all knew he was a UA student now, no one was sending him any analyses to give him a chance to rest! He was going insane!

He opened his computer and started browsing the hero forums. Maybe someone would mention a villain he could track down or something? He could just find the guy, then send the information to the group chat! That would be a good idea.

To his surprise, people on the forum were actually still talking about that article he'd released a few weeks ago. Izuku hadn't really thought it would make that big of an impact and he hadn't been thinking about it recently because he'd been focusing on the sports festival, but...maybe it would be good to write a follow up? Especially since after what Todoroki told him at the sports festival….

Well, he needed something to do anyway, so why not?

Are schools weaponizing their strongest students?

A little girl has a quirk that allows her to move any object with her mind and she has excellent control over it. Her teachers constantly praise her for her strength and her quirk, teaching her, whether implicitly or explicitly, that she is better than her peers. She, of course, grows to believe these adults because why wouldn't she? Teachers are meant to teach us, and adults are meant to be trusted.

The scene is a familiar one, but what happens when those adults, the ones our children are supposed to trust, take a dislike to a weaker student? Sure, they could purposely give them a lower grade, or put them in detention for

no reason at all, but that would reflect badly on the teacher and harm their future chances of promotion. Wouldn't it be so much easier to let the students do the work?

So when our little girl with a strong telekinesis quirk is mean to a little boy who can change his eye color, the teacher looks the other way. Maybe they even send the little girl a smile before they do so, letting her know that it's ok to act that way because the boy is weaker than she is. So the little girl keeps being mean, desperate for the praise and validation that the teachers give her when she's strong. She gets meaner to prove that she is the best because the teacher has taught her that anyone below the best gets hurt. She has to hurt others so that no one hurts her.

If the bullying ever comes to light, well, that's just kids being kids. Kids are cruel, there's nothing we can do about that, now is there? And besides, those weak students just need to toughen up, life isn't easy, you know. It's not the teacher's fault, obviously not, kids are just like that. And so our strong little girl ultimately shoulders all the blame for the crimes that her teacher encouraged her to commit.

Is it right that the teacher manipulated that little girl? Is it right that an adult she trusted turned her into a human weapon to avoid accusations of discrimination? Looking at the current school system in Japan, it must be, because that is the way our schools are run. There are thousands of children like that little girl who have been weaponized and manipulated into harming the same children who, if the adults preferred, could have been their friends.

There are thousands of cases of bullying reported in elementary schools every year, but by the time those same kids reach middle school, those cases have dropped to the hundreds and by high school they're almost non-existent. According to the schools, it's because the students are maturing and becoming less cruel, but anyone who has walked through the halls can tell you that that can't possibly be the case.

The truth is that by the time students get to middle school and high school, they have been taught that this is the way the world works. This cycle of abuse and victimization has been so encouraged that it is now so deeply ingrained in a child's psyche that she can't possibly understand any other way of seeing the world. The strong become bullies and the other students are forced to suffer in silence by the malicious inaction of their teachers.

Some of you reading this right now are probably questioning my claims. Surely, you say, things can't be that bad! We trust our teachers to care for our students, so the idea that they are turning their best students into cruel

weapons is absurd! This article is simply trying to undermine the society that we have worked so hard to build!

If that describes you, then perhaps you'd be interested in a real life example. Musutafu is home to Aldera Middle School. It's an average school in almost every sense of the word. It's students often go on to average high schools and live average lives, just like most schools. So it shouldn't come as any surprise that their attitudes and behavior are quite average as well. In the last year, there were 87 cases of bullying reported. This, in and of itself, is not damning. After all, kids will be kids, right?

Where it gets interesting, however, is the distribution of that number. Of those 87 cases, 64 of them were reported by seventh graders. For those of you too lazy to do the math, that's 73%. Of the remaining 24 cases, 16 were reported by eight graders, which means that by their final year of middle school, students are only reporting 10 incidents of bullying for the entire year.

But, maybe you're right, maybe these students are simply getting more mature and less incidents are actually occurring. A decent school like Aldera couldn't possibly be discouraging students from reporting the abuse, could they?

So let's look at how those 87 cases were handled. Of the 87 incidents, no disciplinary action was taken in 20 of them, which leaves us with 67. A verbal warning was reportedly given in 42 cases, which leaves us with 25. This is where it gets interesting. In 18 of those 25 cases, a detention or suspension was given not to the student who was reported as the perpetrator, but to the student that reported the bullying. In the incident reports, it is always noted that, "upon further investigation, we discovered that the accusations of misbehavior were false and thus the student in question was disciplined for lying and for purposely trying to cause trouble for their better-behaved peers."

That was the report in 18 cases. 18 out of 87. That is 20% for those of you that are keeping track. If Aldera Middle School is to be believed, 20% of their students are chronic liars who are intent on maliciously ruining the reputations of their innocent peers. Of course, there is always the possibility that these students were, in fact, telling the truth, but were silenced so that their stronger peers would retain spotless records, but obviously something like that would never happen in a good school like Aldera, right?

In the end, only 7 perpetrators actually received punishment. The strongest students' violent behavior is encouraged by the fact that they are almost entirely untouchable. Their teachers, the same ones that have turned these

students against their friends and peers and weaponized them to prey on the weak, protect them and allow them to continue being abusers rather than moulding them into upstanding members of society.

So what is to be done? To be honest, I don't know, but I do know that this pattern cannot continue. The teachers responsible for guiding our children are poisoning their minds and weaponizing them against one another and the people who are suffering from this are the children.

Something needs to change.

12857: *(Deku)*

Hey Nedzu, I wrote another article. Would you mind looking it over?

Attachment

62020: *(Nedzu)*

Ah! This is brilliant Midoriya, as always. How did you get a hold of the statistics?

12857: *(Deku)*

Most of them are public record, if you know where to look, but the names have obviously been excluded for privacy reasons. The rest...I may have had to ask Tsukauchi.

62020: *(Nedzu)*

Good work using your connections to your advantage! You are improving in that aspect, though I do believe it would be beneficial to learn how to hack. Perhaps that can be the focus for our next lesson? For now, though, when were you planning on posting this article?

12857: *(Deku)*

I was thinking tomorrow morning. Most people browse the forums on

their way to work, so if I were to set it up to post around 7:00, I could take advantage of the rush hour traffic.

62020: *(Nedzu)*

Perfect! And you were planning on using the same anonymous accounts you used to publish your last article, correct?

12857: *(Deku)*

I don't know. Do you think it would be more impactful that way?

62020: *(Nedzu)*

If you use the same accounts, this article will automatically be associated with your last and will enjoy the same popularity. I would recommend building on the traction you have already established.

12857: *(Deku)*

Alright! I'll do that then! Thanks, Nedzu!

62020: *(Nedzu)*

Anytime, Midoriya. I look forward to the chaos you'll cause tomorrow!

62020 has left the chat

12857: *(Deku)*

Wait...chaos!?

Teachers

Chapter Summary

UA holds a staff meeting.

Group Message

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Problem child, I thought you were supposed to be resting.

12857: *(Deku)*

I've hardly left my room since the sports festival, Eraser. I *am* resting!

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Then perhaps you'd care to explain the article that immediately went viral this morning?

12857: *(Deku)*

...I was bored?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Wait, *Deku* wrote that?

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

We're talking about the one about schools weaponizing children, correct?

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Damn, kid, good work!

12857: *(Deku)*

Thanks, I know I came on kinda strong in some parts....

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

I think some strength was needed, considering the topic.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Yeah, I gotta agree, but why are you even writing inflammatory articles to begin with kid?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

It's part of his private lessons with Nedzu.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

...What is that rat teaching the kid!?

12857: *(Deku)*

How to ruin a reputation and use public opinion to my advantage.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Good one...wait, you *are* joking, right?

12857: *(Deku)*

…

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Oh my god, Shouta, no! Why are you letting that rat corrupt our sweet innocent son!?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

He’s not our son, Emi, and Nedzu isn’t corrupting him.

12857: *(Deku)*

Umm…do I get any say in this?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Shhh, sweetie. The adults are talking.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Aww! They’re fighting like an old married couple!

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

We are not a couple.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

Of course not, Eraser. And on a completely unrelated topic, how long

have you two been calling each other by your first names?

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Busted!

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

...I hate you all.

12857: *(Deku)*

Except for *Emi* , you *love* her.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Have you forgotten that I have the power to give you detention?

12857: *(Deku)*

...Point taken. You always were my favorite, Eraser!

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Ahh, but Eraser's favorite is obviously Joke.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Why do I even put up with you guys?

"Alright!" Mic said loudly. "What about Aizawa's phone is currently the most annoying thing in the world? Everybody take a guess!"

“It’s one of those updates that makes everything worse.” Snipe suggested.

“Hmm,” Thirteen thought for a minute. “Maybe he got a message saying he’s famous now.”

“No,” Nedzu took a sip of his tea, “it’s much more likely that the message is about his favorite cat cafe closing down.”

“Ooooh!” Midnight’s face lit up. “Maybe Joke finally confessed her love!”

“She does that all the time.” Shouta muttered.

“No.” Oh no, the look on Mic’s face was not good. “I don’t think *Emi* confessing her love would annoy him at all!”

Shouta groaned, “Not you guys too.”

“Wait,” Vlad leaned forward slightly, “Aizawa are you *dating* someone?”

“Aizawa’s got a girlfriend?” All Might asked

Shouta glared at him, “I do not have a girlfriend.”

“She calls you by your first name.” Mic grinned.

“She’s just like that.”

“You call her by hers”

“Doesn’t mean we’re dating.”

“Oh, they’re on a first name basis!” Midnight squealed. “That’s so cute! Oh my goodness, you are totally together!”

Shouta sighed, “Look, Emi and I are close friends, but that’s it! I mean we haven’t even been on a single date.”

“Well then, maybe you had better ask her!” Nedzu said cheerfully.

Shouta’s face got hot and he wished Recovery Girl hadn’t taken the bandages off yesterday. If he was still a mummy, no one would be able to call him out for blushing.

“Don’t tell me that you’re waiting for her to ask you!” Recovery Girl

hit him on the head with her cane, “Kids these days have no respect for tradition!”

“I’m not a kid.” Shouta wasn’t pouting as he rubbed his head. He wasn’t. That would be illogical.

“Still,” Thirteen said, “if you like this girl, you should ask her out. What does she like to do?”

“Aren’t we supposed to be looking over the draft papers?”

“You are quite right!” Nedzu chirped. “Now, have we finished sorting the offers for all the students? Good, let’s start with the first years then. Who got the most offers?”

“That would be…” Midnight sorted through some of the piles in front of her, “Todoroki. He got over 4000! Impressive.”

“Yeah, I’m not surprised.” Snipe said. “That kids quirk is something else and that’s not even taking his control into account. He probably would have gotten more if he’d actually shown off his fire, though.”

“But he *did* use it.” Thirteen pointed out. “After how stubborn he was at the beginning of the year, that’s quite the accomplishment.”

“What did he say to you All Might?” Aizawa sighed when All Might simply stared at him blankly. “At the medal ceremony? You asked him about his fire, what did he say?”

“Oh, well, he said that he was still unsure about a lot of things...and that he had someone he needed to talk with? I’m not sure, I’m sorry, I don’t really remember.”

Aizawa took a deep breath. This man really had no idea what it meant to be a teacher did he? One of his students had a major breakthrough and he couldn’t even bother to remember the conversation long enough to tell the other teachers? It was the height of stupidity.

“I’ll follow up with him.” Aizawa said finally. “I’m his homeroom teacher, so hopefully I’ll be able to get through to him. It would help if we knew why he refused to use his fire in the first place.”

Nedzu nodded, “That it would. If anyone discovers the reason, please bring it up immediately so it can be adequately handled. Hopefully he’ll choose an internship that will help him with that control.” He clapped his hands together. “Very well, next student!”

“That would be Bakugo.” Snipe said. “He got only about a hundred less than Todoroki did. Pretty good considering he tried to fight his classmate *after* he was defeated?”

“Do you know what that was about, Hound Dog?” Shouta asked. “You talked to him before the medal ceremony, right?”

“I’m still just impressed you got him to calm down!” Midnight exclaimed. “I thought he was going to explode the whole stadium!”

Hound Dog sighed, “There’s some deep seated issues there, I’m not gonna lie. The jist of it is that his whole life, his teachers have been comparing him to Midoriya, basically telling him that he’s everything that Midoriya isn’t and that he’s the best. So, if he’s not decisively the best…”

“Then he may as well be a worthless deku.” Shouta finished.

Hound Dog nodded, “Because Todoroki wasn’t fighting at full strength, Bakugo couldn’t truly prove he was the best, and since he couldn’t prove he was the best, he was worthless. It’s a complicated mix of both a superiority complex and an inferiority complex, most likely with a healthy dose of imposter syndrome thrown in, but it does make a lot of sense, considering.”

“Wow.” Midnight said. “That’s messed up.”

Shouta agreed. No wonder the kid reacted so violently. He was constantly trying to prove to everyone that he deserved to be treated with basic human decency, since no one had shown that decency to Deku. The kid wasn’t able to recognize his own worth unless he received validation from the outside. That...sounded absolutely miserable.

“We’re gonna work on it.” Hound Dog continued. “But for now, if there are issues like this again, send him to me before you punish him for blowing up. It’s gonna take a while before he’ll be able to have a healthy sense of confidence, but he can get there. I believe in him.”

“Very well. We’ll trust you to handle Bakugo’s considerable temper for now, Hound Dog.” Nedzu said. “Now moving onto the third highest offer count…”

“That’s Deku.” Shouta said quickly. “He got just under 900 offers.”

“Isn’t that a bit high?” All Might asked. “He only reached the top 16.”

“Actually, it’s lower than I expected.” Cementoss said. “Normally, with a reputation like Midoriya’s, offers would be pouring in.”

“It is most likely because he is quirkless.” Nedzu said bluntly. “Until the sports festival, most heroes who had worked with Deku assumed he had some kind of analysis quirk, but word of his quirk status spread fairly quickly after the first round. Most underground heroes don’t place a lot of weight on quirks, but daylight heroes do. Most of Midoriya’s offers are from underground heroes, correct?”

Shouta nodded, “Almost all of them, in fact.”

“I’m not surprised. Not that it truly matters, since he’s already been spoken for.”

Shouta raised his eyebrow, “Oh? And who has that kind of authority?”

Nedzu grinned, “Me! I’m not going to pass up a chance to mould a mind like Midoriya’s, and you have already had your chance to work with him. Besides, if I’m not wrong, *you* put in a request for a different student, Aizawa.”

Shouta sighed. It was going to be an interesting internship week.

To be a Hero

Chapter Summary

Going back to UA. Hero Names.

The train to UA was always crowded, but Izuku didn't really mind. He just grabbed his phone and browsed the hero forums, smiling as he saw people talking about his article. He still felt bad about calling out his old middle school, but Nedzu was right, they were just going to keep hurting people unless somebody did something. This way, people were actually comparing the statistics he'd shared with some from other schools and were realizing that this was a more generalized problem than anyone had assumed. But then again, they hadn't assumed that it was a problem at all. Change would still take time, obviously, but at least…

"Psst, hey aren't you Midoriya? From class 1A?"

Izuku jumped and craned his neck to look behind him at the man who'd recognized him, "Uuh, yeah, that's me…"

The man smiled, "Good job at the sports festival."

"You got to the final round, didn't you?" another man asked. "That's really impressive."

"Did you say Midoriya?" a woman asked. "Didn't one of the commentators also call you Deku?"

"Uh, yeah." Midoriya fidgeted as he realized how many people were looking at him. "Deku is my hero name, actually. I've done some analysis work for some pros already, so they announced that name so people would know who I was."

"Wait…" an older woman with a stern face frowned at him. "I heard rumors that Deku was quirkless."

"No way!" Someone else said. "UA would never let somebody quirkless into the hero course."

Izuku hesitated. He didn't have to confirm his quirklessness. He could just laugh and not say anything, let them each believe what they wanted to about him. It'd be easier, especially since these guys seemed to be rooting for him and that would change as soon as they realized

he didn't have a quirk, but...how was he supposed to give hope to the next generation of quirkless kids if he was too afraid to even acknowledge who he was?

"Umm," Izuku took a deep breath, "actually, there's no rule preventing people like me from applying. As long as I'm able to pass the test, I qualify for the hero course."

The car went silent.

"It's true? You're actually quirkless?"

Izuku gave a shaky smile, "Yeah, I, uh, I just wasn't born with any powers."

As he expected, the mood in the train car immediately shifted. Some people started glaring at him while others looked shocked and the rest looked at him in pity. He'd have to get used to this, though, he'd be dealing with it his entire career.

"Sorry…" The man who'd recognized him put a hand on his shoulder, probably in an attempt to comfort him.

Izuku smiled, "It's not a big deal. Yeah, it might make things a little harder sometimes, but I don't let it hold me back.

"Why would you even try to be a hero without a quirk?" another man asked.

"I want to help people." Izuku responded. A lot of kids did it for the fame or the power, so maybe his reason might seem a little lackluster, but it was enough for him.

"There's other ways to help people…" A woman said after a long pause, "safer ways.

Izuku nodded, "I know, but I want to be a hero. Don't worry, I've had enough training that I know how to not die the moment I get out in the field."

"Useless!" Izuku flinched as an old man practically growled at him. "Leave the opportunities for those who actually deserve them! Do you know how many kids with quirks would kill for a seat in the hero course? And yet you're filling it up with your useless ass!"

The other occupants in the car glanced at one another awkwardly.

Apparently they didn't know whether they were supposed to step in or not, which Izuku understood. He just had to be strong enough to take it. There were always going to be people who hated the idea of a quikless hero.

"You may as well go home kid." Someone else said. "You're just gonna get yourself killed."

"Good riddance, I say." The old man muttered. "Then at least his spot'll be filled with someone who actually has a chance of being a hero."

No one really knew what to say to that, so the rest of Izuku's ride to UA was spent in awkward silence. Izuku sighed in relief when it was finally his stop and he stepped off the train.

"Midoriya!"

Izuku turned around to see a woman he didn't recognize running toward him, "Umm, what can I do for you?"

The woman took a moment to catch her breath, "I, um, I'm sorry I didn't say anything on the train...I'm just...I'm such a coward."

Izuku shrugged, "It's ok, it was a pretty weird situation, but I'm used to insults, so you don't have to apologize."

The woman frowned, "You shouldn't have to be used to it…"

"Umm," Izuku said, "if that's all, I'd probably better be getting to class…"

"Wait!" The woman grabbed his arm, then quickly dropped it again. "Um, I just wanted to thank you. You see, my daughter's quirkless and it's been really hard on her. When we realized after the sports festival that you were too…" she laughed, "well, let's just say she's watched the festival seven times in the past three days."

Izuku stared at her in shock. There was a kid...who was inspired by him? He smiled brightly, "That's amazing! Well, you tell her that being quirkless isn't the end of the world. I know she probably has a lot of people that tell her that she's worthless or that she can't contribute anything to society, but, well, I know she can do anything if she puts in the work."

The woman smiled, "Thank you so much! It just...it meant the world

for her to be able to see someone like her competing on the same level as the kids with quirks. Though I'm kinda scared for that guy with the brainwashing quirk. If my daughter ever sees him, I'm fairly certain she'll attack him on sight just to defend your honor."

Izuku laughed, "I'll be sure to tell Shinso to watch his back."

"Also, I get a heart attack every time she watches the obstacle course." She said. "It's her favorite part, but...maybe in the future, could you not be so reckless? I don't want her getting any ideas…"

"Oh." Izuku hadn't really thought about that. He was an example now. "I'm sorry, I'll try to be more careful. Tell your daughter I said hi, ok?"

"Actually," the woman rifled through her purse until she found a notebook and pen, "could I get your autograph?"

Izuku smiled and took the notebook, "What's your daughter's name?"

"It's Aia."

Dear Aia,

I know it's hard sometimes, being like us, but just know that I believe in you! You'll have to work hard, but you can do that. I hope you can join me in showing the world that quirkless does not mean worthless.

Sincerely,

Deku

Izuku arrived at the lockers just as Iida finished putting away his things, "Iida…"

Iida smiled, "If it's about my brother, everything will be fine, I'm sorry I made you worry."

Izuku frowned as Iida left. Nothing had been released to the public yet, but from what Ingenium's sidekicks were saying to other heroes on the forum he used, there was a good chance Iida's brother had been permanently paralyzed by the hero killer. That wasn't *fine.*

Izuku shook his head and went to class. If Iida needed help, he'd ask, Izuku just had to be there for him and trust him to know what he needed. That's what friends were for, right?

When he got to the classroom, everyone was talking about their newfound fame. Apparently he wasn't the only one who'd been recognized on the way to school.

"Everyone wanted to talk to me on my way here!" Ashido gushed.

"Me too!" Kirishima said. "It was kinda crazy."

"You'll never guess what a group of elementary school brats yelled at me!" Sero whined.

"Nice try?" Tsu suggested. The rest of the class laughed.

"Yeah, well, at least they didn't tell you they'd be happy if you died." Izuku said casually. The class turned to him in horror and he suddenly remembered that death threats weren't really the norm for quirked students.

"What?" Uraraka's eyes were wide and Izuku just shrugged awkwardly.

"Apparently some people don't take too kindly to a quirkless kid getting into the hero course." He said simply. "Don't worry about it guys, I've gotten death threats before, I'm used to it."

Katsuki glanced back at him, then huffed and faced forward again. He was probably remembering the death threats he'd delivered himself, but...he was actually doing a lot better recently. Izuku had hoped that the therapy would work, but in all honesty, he'd known there was a possibility that Katsuki was too far gone. But he wasn't, so that was good!

"Guys," Kaminari looked around the room, "does anyone know where Mineta is? He's not usually this late."

"Mineta has been transferred to class 1C." Aizawa announced as he strode through the door. He was followed by Shinso, who looked bored, but Izuku didn't miss the extra tension he was holding in his shoulders. "After his poor performance in the sports festival, not to mention his obvious groping of Yaoyorozu that was caught on camera, we decided that his spot could be put to better use. Shinso, you'll be taking the seat behind Deku."

Shinso looked at Aizawa in confusion, so Izuku smiled and raised his hand, "He means me. Deku's my hero name."

Shinso nodded and made his way to the empty desk as Aizawa continued, “Speaking of hero names. You need to pick yours.” He activated his quirk as the class erupted into whispers. “This is of course related to the hero draft picks I mentioned last class. Normally, you wouldn’t have to worry about being drafted until your second or third years, but your class is obviously different. Here are the totals for those of you who got offers.”

Izuku looked up at the board and gasped when he realized just how many offers he’d gotten. Of course, he was nowhere near Todoroki or Bakugo, but...wow.

“I…” Shinso sounded just as shocked as Izuku felt. “I got offers? I wasn’t even in the hero course yet.”

Izuku glanced at the board again and, although he was at the bottom of the list, Shinso had three offers, “Good job, Shinso!”

Aoyama pouted, “How come he got offers, and not moi!”

“Maybe because he made it farther than you did.” Tsu said helpfully.

“Despite these results,” Aizawa said loudly, “You’ll all be interning with pros. All of you except for Shinso experienced real villains at the USJ, but it will still be helpful to see pros in action.”

“And for that, we need hero names!” Uraraka yelled.

Aizawa nodded, “These hero names will most likely be temporary, but take them seriously or…”

“You’ll have hell to pay!” Midnight threw open the door and sauntered in. “What you pick today could be your codename for life. So be careful, or you’ll be stuck with something utterly indecent.”

“Yeah, if you get a reputation on your internships, you won’t be able to easily change your name. Midnight’s going to have the final say on your code names, it’s not my forte.”

Izuku turned and whispered to Shinso, “That’s how he got stuck with Eraserhead. Present Mic…”

“Ahem.” Izuku turned back forward to see Aizawa glaring at him. “If you forgot, that’s also how you got stuck with the name *Deku* , so you don’t have any right to talk. The name you pick is important. It shows what kind of hero you want to be.”

Midnight passed out some whiteboards as Aizawa passed out. Izuku turned to Shinso again...it probably wasn't a good idea to have a friend so close. How did Iida and Uraraka manage sitting right next to each other? Or Yaoyorozu and Todoroki? Izuku didn't think he was that much more social than them.

"So, Shinso, do you have any ideas yet?"

Shinso stared blankly at his board, "I didn't even know I was in the hero course until I showed up to school this morning. How did you pick your name? Aizawa said that it should represent the kind of hero you want to be, so why did you pick a synonym for useless?"

Izuku chuckled awkwardly, "I didn't actually think it was going to be my hero name when I picked it. In fact, at that point I didn't think I was going to be a hero at all. Deku is a name...my bullys used to call me. I guess it's kinda come to represent where I come from, you know? So even after I've achieved my dream, I won't forget how hard it was to get here."

Shinso blinked at him, "You didn't even hesitate to respond to my question."

"Why would I…?" Izuku asked. "Oh, your quirk! Don't worry, I'm sure you have excellent control, and if you brainwash me on accident, it's not a big deal, you can just let me go."

"But...aren't you afraid I'm a villain or something?"

Izuku was confused for a moment before he remembered that Shinso had mentioned he'd been bullied for having a villain quirk. He shook his head, "No. You're here to be a hero and so am I. It doesn't matter what anybody else says, right?"

Shinso thought for another long moment before writing something down and showing it to Izuku, who smiled.

Mindblank .

Great Minds

Chapter Summary

Izuku talks with Nedzu about Todoroki's...situation.

Chapter Notes

It is finals week at my university, so I will be switching to my "slow" update schedule which is every four days rather than my "normal" update schedule which is every two days. Thanks for being understanding and be warned that this week might be a bit wonky as I switch over!

Nedzu sipped his tea and scrolled through the news as he waited for Midoriya to arrive for his lesson. When he had suggested Midoriya get some good old fashioned revenge on his middle school, he hadn't anticipated just how far the boy would go. Especially after their first lesson when Midoriya had been hesitant to even consider the *idea* of ruining someone's reputation, Nedzu had expected that they would take down Aldera, then Midoriya would politely say that he wasn't at all fond of the experience and that would be the end of it.

Instead, Midoriya had surprised him by not only deciding that society at large was at fault for his abuse, but also by taking steps to change the system. And what was most surprising was that it was *working.* Midoriya's first article had made waves simply by suggesting that society might be broken and hurting both the strong and the weak, but his second article was causing *outrage* .

Nedzu made a mental note that he needed to teach Midoriya more about rhetoric, because he already seemed to be a natural at it. Imagine how powerful Mdioriya's words could be if that skill was honed! His word choice alone was enough to produce the effect he was looking for, with words like *manipulation* and *weaponizing children,* anyone who read it would immediately be up in arms. The fact that Midoirya had used statistics to back up his vitriol was simply the icing on the cake.

Some journalists were also wondering if the abuses Midoriya had pointed out in the school system were the reason so many people turned to villainy. Midoiriya had been careful to put the focus of each of his articles on powerful, quirked children to force people to care, but his article had been worded in such a way that it was clear that

the system was hurting both the strong and the weak. It wasn't a large jump in logic, therefore, to assume that both those groups were being pushed toward villainy.

The proximity alarm outside his office beeped and Nedzu looked at the cameras to see Midoriya approaching the door. He smiled and hopped off his chair to open the door right as Midoriya raised his hand to knock. What could he say, it was the simple things that made him smile.

"Good afternoon, Midoriya," he chirped, "how were your morning classes?"

"How do you always do that?" Midoriya muttered as he walked in. "Um, morning classes were good, just hero names and stuff, so kinda repetitive for me. I was happy to see that Shinso made it in though! What made you decide to transfer him? He didn't end up making it to the podium."

"Yes, that's true." Nedzu sat back down behind the desk and poured Midoriya a cup of tea. "But in the fights he did have, he showed remarkable skill and ingenuity. Aizawa especially pushed for his admittance after proclaiming that he had much more potential than Mineta, who probably shouldn't have been allowed in the hero course in the first place. Though of course the entrance exam only shows us quirks and fighting ability, not sexual harassment and selfishness. Theoretically, that's what one's academic record is for, but..."

"But most of the time, incidents remain unreported as long as you have a strong enough quirk." Midoriya finished. "Yeah, I know. That's what I'm trying to change."

"And you are doing a very fine job!" Nedzu grinned. "Have you been tracking the fallout from your latest article?"

Midoriya shook his head, "Not really, no. I mean, I did check a little yesterday, but today's been kinda busy."

"Well then, let me tell you!" Nedzu pulled up some of the more interesting reaction pieces he'd found and showed the screen to Midoriya. "First of all, Tsukauchi has actually opened an investigation into your old school as a result of this article. That part hasn't made it to the news quite yet, but I figured you'd want to know."

Midoriya stared at him with wide eyes, "R-really? People can really get in trouble with the law just because of some negative press?"

“A more accurate way to say it would be that the press sometimes brings issues to law enforcement’s attention.” Nedzu chirped. “The police can’t arrest a villain if they do not know of their crimes, afterall.”

Midoriya bit his lip and looked like he wanted to say something, but wasn’t quite sure how to bring it up. Well, Nedzu’s interest was piqued. Whatever Midoriya had to say, he hoped that it would lead to just as much chaos as their lessons had so far.

“You have something on your mind, Midoriya.” Nedzu prompted. “What is it?”

Midoriya hesitated for another long moment, “what if...well, I mean, I wanted to finish our campaign against Aldera now so that...it’s probably weird and maybe we shouldn’t go after…”

Nedzu frowned for a moment as he tried to make sense of Midoriya’s mumblings. Whatever was on his mind was obviously causing him great anxiety, “Midoriya, you said you wanted to *finish* smearing Aldera. Is that because you have a new target in mind?”

Midoriya smiled sheepishly, “But, I mean it’ll probably work, but we’d have to be really careful to not completely destabilize society so it’d probably be really dangerous…”

Nedzu grinned in excitement. Teaching Midoriya would never be dull, would it? Nedzu didn’t even know what Midoriya had in mind, but he was already looking forward to it. Besides, the destabilizing of society sounded like *just* high enough stakes to make their next project interesting!

“I’m all ears, Midoriya.”

“Well, you know how Todoroki didn’t want to use his fire at the sports festival?”

Nedzu nodded, “Yes, he was quite adamant that he would never use his fire in battle.”

Midoriya took a deep breath, “I found out why.”

Nedzu getsured for Midoriya to continue and took a sip of tea.

“Endeavor’s abusive.”

Nedzu choked a little on the tea and Midoirya rushed to grab a tissue to hand to him as Nedzu recovered.

“I’m so sorry, Nedzu. I probably should have waited until you were done drinking, I have terrible timing and…”

“It’s quite alright, Midoriya.” Nedzu said. “It was simply...an unexpected revelation. Would you mind explaining how you know this? Endeavor can be quite harsh with the villains he faces, but that does not mean that roughness extends to his own family.”

“Todoroki told me.” Midoriya looked small as he played with his hands. “He said that Endeavor forced his mom into a quirk marriage so that he’d have a kid with a perfect blend of ice and fire so that he could surpass All Might. It goes way beyond a simple rivalry, Endeavor is forcing his own child to fight his war!”

Nedzu’s brain kicked into overdrive as the pieces belatedly fell into place. Todoroki refused to use the fire side of his quirk, and *only the fire side* . Endeavor’s wife, who by all accounts had decent mental health before her marriage, had been hospitalized for brutally attacking her own son, and yet Todoroki had no problems using the ice side of his quirk that he inherited from her. Endeavor’s wedding, which should have been a major event with how high he had been in the hero rankings even then, had almost qualified as an elopement and his in-laws lived well above their station. Nedzu had assumed they were being paid under the table for something, but he’d thought it was drugs, not…

“I wish I could say that I was surprised.” Nedzu said finally. “But what do you expect us to do about this? As much as I know that we need to help Todoroki, accusing the number two hero of child abuse would…”

“Destabilize the hero system and most likely the japanese government.” Midoriya finished. “I know, which is why we can’t arrest him. But that doesn’t mean we can’t bring him down.”

Nedzu poured himself another cup of tea to replace the one that had been lost to his spit take, “Color me intrigued, Midoriya. Care to explain?”

Midoriya nodded eagerly, “If Endeavor’s abuse were to come to light right now, people would lose faith in heroes as an institution, rather than in the one hero that is guilty. However, if we gradually make people lose faith in *Endeavor* , both as a hero and a person, then when his abuse eventually comes to light, no one will be surprised. They’ll

simply say *we knew it all along* and keep their faith in the hero system."

"Hmm," Nedzu took a sip of tea, "interesting idea, Midoriya. So you are not saying that Endeavor cannot be arrested, but that he cannot be arrested *right now* ."

"Exactly!"

"And how would you propose destroying the people's faith in Endeavor?" Nedzu prompted. "It's going to be extraordinarily difficult to make people believe badly in the number two hero."

"Well, I was thinking we could start by pointing out his temper?" Midoriya said.

"Are you sure that's going to work?" Nedzu asked. "Endeavor's temper is well known and there are people that love him not only in spite of his anger, but because of it."

"I don't know…" Midoriya thought for a minute. "I still think it's the best place to begin, actually, and that's precisely *because* everyone already knows about his temper. If I ask people to believe that Endeavor is a horrible human being right out of the gate, people will just laugh me off, but if I start with something they know…"

Nedzu grinned, "Then they'll be more likely to swallow what comes after. It seems you've been paying attention to our lessons, Midoriya. That's good. But Endeavor's temper is just the beginning, so what next?"

Midoriya's eyes gleamed with intelligence and determination and Nedzu felt a thrill as he realized the boy had already thought that through, "Next we deal with his collateral damage until people are convinced that it's the highest in the industry. That will probably take several articles to drive the point home. Next, we deal with his overkill toward the villains he fights."

"Excellent." Nedzu said. "But I believe you should switch those two points. Can you tell me why?"

"No…" Midoriya frowned and began muttering, "It can't be because of severity because hurting a human being is obviously worse than hurting a building or a road, but then again, many people don't necessarily see villains as human beings, at least not in the same way as a…oh."

Nedzu smiled again as Midoirya's eyes widened in realization, "Yes?"

"Endeavor's behavior toward villains is objectively worse than his collateral damage." Midoriya said. "But it's also pretty far removed from the average person's everyday life, just like Endeavor's temper is. The damage that Endeavor does to buildings and infrastructure, though, impacts civilians directly. We could even point out that civilians could be in those buildings that Endeavor burns down to really make it hit close to home. And since we're starting off small and highlighting more dangerous offenses as time goes on, putting civilian damages after villain damages only makes sense."

Nedzu nodded, "Very good, Midoirya! I do believe that this plan of yours has potential. Do keep an eye on Todoroki, however. We don't want Endeavor taking his frustrations out on his son when his reputation starts to plunge."

Midoriya frowned, "I hadn't even thought about that…"

"Don't worry about it too much," Nedzu winked, "perhaps by the time that Endeavor begins to see a meaningful dip at the polls, hurting Todoroki won't be an option anymore."

Midoriya shot him a look, "You just enjoy being cryptic, don't you?"

Nedzu simply cackled.

What Kind of Hero do You Want to Be?

Chapter Summary

Bakugo makes some progress.

Chapter Notes

Wow, it's been a hot minute, huh?
I got some fanart!

“Congrats on getting so many offers, man!” Kirishima said. “You impressed a lot of pros!”

“I don’t care about impressing washed-up D-listers.” Katsuki huffed. “They don’t matter. Besides you impressed some pros too, didn’t you?”

Kirishima smiled brightly, “Yeah! It’s so awesome. I kinda wish Crimson Riot were still active so I could intern with him, but that’s the problem with liking old heroes right?”

“Any of those offers from pros with hardening quirks?” Katsuki asked. He really shouldn’t be wasting time like this. He didn’t need friends to be the best!

“No man, it kinda sucks.” Kirishima said. “But then again, quirks are so unique it’s really not that surprising. I think I’ll go with Fourth Kind, he’s pretty manly, right?”

“He’s the extra with four arms right?”

“He’s not an extra, Bakubro.” Kirishima sighed. “He’s a pro!”

“Tch, whatever.”

“Hey Kirishima! Hey Blasty!” Ashido waved as she ran up to them.

“I have a name, Racoon-eyes.”

“So do I,” Ashido smiled, “but you’ve gone nicknames for all of us, so we get a nickname for you! I wanted Explodo-boy, but Kirishima thought Blasty was better.”

“Hey, don’t bring me into this!” Kirishima protested, blushing slightly in his embarrassment. “You guys are the ones that insisted he needed

a nickname!"

"But you're the only one that can take his explosions, so you're the one that needs to take the fall." Ashido said cheerfully. "So, the gang's going out for ice cream during free period. You boys wanna come?"

"Heck yeah!" Kirishima pumped his fist. "What about you, Bakubro? You coming?"

"I'm busy, extras." Katsuki grumbled. "I don't care what you do!"

"Oh no! We've been demoted back to extras, Kirishima." Ashido said dramatically. "Blasty must be in a mood."

"All the more reason he needs ice cream." Kirishima fake-whispered. "Come on, dude, you *sure* you don't wanna come?"

Katsuki scowled, "I already said I was fucking busy, Shitty Hair!"

"Alright, Alright!" Kirishima held his hands up appeasingly. "But it's an open invitation, ok? We'd love to have you if you want, but you do you."

Ashido grabbed Kirishima's arm and started dragging him away, "Come on, I wanna try their new unicorn flavor. Bye, Blasty!"

Katsuki frowned as they left, then spun around on his heel and started stalking toward Hound Dog's office. Even if he didn't have therapy today, he still wouldn't have gone to ice cream. He didn't have *friends* , and he never had. He just had extras that followed him around and told him he was the best and that was all he'd ever needed. He didn't know if Kirishima and the others fell into that category or not. None of the old extras had ever given him a stupid nickname or anything like that. But that's probably what they were, just extras following him around, but if they knew that he needed a therapist, they would never think he was the best again, so Katsuki would have to be careful to never let that slip around any of them. Especially Mr. Sunshine Kirishima.

Katsuki didn't bother knocking on the door. Instead he kicked it open and grinned when the Mutt yelped in surprise. He closed the door behind him and went to sit on the couch as Hound Dog glared at him.

"You know, it's usually polite to wait for permission before barging into a room."

“Come on, Mutt, if I waited for permission, then it wouldn’t be barging.” Katsuki said. “Besides, if you didn’t want me walking in, you’d lock the door.”

Hound Dog rolled his eyes, “I’ll be sure to do that in the future. How are you doing? It’s been a few days since the sports festival, so you’ve gotten a chance to rest, right?”

“Yeah, yeah, I slept the whole day after the festival, so don’t worry about me.” Katsuki snorted.

“And your quirk?” Hound Dog asked. “I know you pushed yourself to quirk exhaustion in a few of your fights.”

“My wrists are a little tender, but nothing I can’t handle.” Katsuki replied.

Hound Dog nodded, “Good, then that means we can get to the good stuff.” He looked at Katsuki intensely. “Let's talk about what happened at the sports festival.”

Katsuki resisted the urge to fidget, “What is there to talk about? It’s over, isn’t it? I took the damn medal like you wanted me, so what else do you want?”

“I want you to tell me what was going through your head when Todoroki wouldn’t use his fire in the last match.” Hound Dog said.

Katsuki wondered how long it’d been since the Mutt had swept his office. There were some black flecks of dust that had ground themselves into the wood over time, making it look dirtier than it probably was. His mom would have a field day if she saw it and would probably try to swear it clean.

Hound Dog sighed, “I’m not here to judge you, Bakugo, but I need to know what’s going on in your brain so I can help you. Now, we're just gonna explore what happened, we’re not even going to label anything as good or bad just yet. Can we do that?”

Katuski shrugged.

“Good enough.” Hound Dog said. “So?”

“If Icy Hot didn’t use his fire, I couldn’t prove I was better than him at full strength.” Katsuki finally grumbled. “I already told you that before the medal ceremony.”

“You’re right, you did.” Hound Dog nodded. “But I wanted to check in again and see if anything had changed or become clearer now that you’ve had a few days to think about it. So?”

Katsuki thought for a moment, “It’s just so fucking confusing. You tell me I did good and I got internship offers, so other people must think the same thing, but…it still doesn’t feel like a win.”

“So the question now is whether you were trying to prove something to everyone watching, or to yourself.”

Katsuki shot Hound Dog an unimpressed look, “Why would I have to prove anything to myself? I *know* I’m the best!”

“Do you?” Hound Dog asked. “Then why do you constantly need everyone else to tell you that?”

…what? Of course Katsuki was the best! He’d known it ever since he got his quirk, so the Mutt just didn’t know what he was talking about. And if he was constantly trying to prove that to everyone else so that he’d know they believed it too, well…well that didn’t mean shit.

“Here’s what I think.” Hound Dog continued. “And I might be wrong about this, obviously, so feel free to tell me, but I think you’ve lived your entire life believing in a false dichotomy. In your experience, people are either the best or they’re worthless, there is no in between. And since there can only be one number one, then your worth is constantly hanging by a thread and everything and *everyone* is a threat to that. That’s why you blow up so easily, because when other people do things, it doesn’t matter what they do, they are directly threatening your worth as a person and you risk falling from your position of superiority and ending up on the ground with all the other useless extras.”

Was that…well, Katsuki wouldn’t have put it in so many words, but then again he hadn’t known he’d *needed* words for it. He’d thought that was just the way the world worked, but the blunt way Hound Dog had put it, it sounded almost ridiculous. Was that…not how everyone experienced things?

“Let’s say your right.” Katsuki huffed. “What would we do about it?”

“Well, we’d need to challenge it.” Hound Dog grinned so his sharp teeth were on full display behind his muzzle. “Unless you’re not up for a challenge?”

“I’m always up to a challenge, Mutt!” Katsuki yelled. “So what do I do?”

“Find the lie. Let’s start with that dichotomy I talked about. People are either the best or they’re worthless. Find the lie.”

“That’s obvious. Yeah, sure, All Might’s number one, but that doesn’t mean that the other heroes in the top ten like Ende…like Hawks and Jeanist are nothing.”

Hound Dog’s eyes narrowed, “You were about to include Endeavor on that list, but didn’t. Why?”

Katsuki shrunk slightly, “I don’t want to be like Endeavor.”

“Why not? Out of all the heroes in Japan, he’s the one with a temper that can rival your own.”

“But I want to be able to turn mine off!” Katsuki yelled.

Hound Dog’s eyes widened, “Alright, that’s a good goal and I’ll help you, but what makes you think Endeavor can’t turn his off?”

“I don’t know if it’s my secret to tell.” Damn, he was starting to turn into Deku and mumbling everything.

Unfortunately, Hound Dog’s quirk gave him excellent hearing, “Then whose secret is it?”

Katsuki kept his eyes on the floor, and when he spoke his voice was softer than it had been since he’d manifested his quirk, “I used to look up to Endeavor. I thought *he’s an asshole too* , and that meant that I wasn’t wrong for being so angry, it was just another reason I was destined to be the best. But he’s not just a jerk, he hurt Icy-Hot. Hurt him for years, just like…”

Katsuki couldn’t bring himself to continue, but Hound Dog seemed to realize there was more he *needed* to say, “Just like what, Bakugo?”

“Just like I hurt Deku!” Katsuki growled. “There, I said it. I hurt the damn nerd and that was wrong! But I don’t want to be like that bastard anymore, I want to be better! I don’t wanna be a hero like Endeavor!”

Hound Dog let out a deep breath, “Then what kind of hero do you want to be?”

Katsuki finally looked up and met Hound Dog's eyes, "What?"

Hound Dog smiled, "You heard me. What kind of hero do *you* want to be, Bakugo? Not what kind of hero do you think is the best, or what kind of hero your old teachers told you you were going to be. No. I want to know what kind of hero Katsuki Bakugo wants to be."

"I..I don't know anymore." Katsuki said softly. "I always thought I was going to be *King Explosion Murder* , but Midnight shot that name down for being too violent. And she's right. I don't want to be a violent hero like Endeavor, but I also don't think I can be a smiling hero like All Might."

"That's ok." Hound Dog said. "It may be harder sometimes, but you are allowed to be your own person, Bakugo. You are allowed to forge your own path. I think you can do it."

"Of course I can, Mutt." Katsuki smiled briefly. "But I don't know what that path is yet. Am I allowed to think about it?"

Hound Dog nodded, "Let's have that be your homework this week. I'm not expecting you to have all the answers by our next session, but I'll give you a chance next time to talk about what you discovered. Alright?"

Katsuki nodded and stood to leave, "Oh, and Mutt? If you breathe a word about this to anyone, you're dead."

Hound Dog gave a barking laugh, "There's the Bakugo we know and love! Have a good week."

Katsuki rolled his eyes, "Whatever, Mutt."

Ryo Inui waited until Bakugo had left before picking up his phone and dialing Nedzu, "We need to talk about Todoroki."

Internship Decisions

Chapter Summary

The students make plans for internship week.

Izuku read through his list of offers one last time before turning back to the post-it note that had been stuck on the front when Aizawa had handed him the packet.

Midoriya,

Congratulations on your offers! I am absolutely astounded at how well you were accepted at the sports festival and am, of course, proud of you. I would prefer, however, that you spend this coming internship week with me. Your offers are all from underground pro heroes, but you have already had substantial combat experience in that environment. Midoriya, your mind is your most powerful weapon, but it still needs to be sharpened and honed for you to be the best hero you can be. It is in your best interest, therefore, to develop it further and I am sure you will agree that I am the hero best suited to assist you in that goal. If you have your heart set on one of the other heroes on your list, I will not stand in your way, but I will assume you will be interning with me unless you tell me otherwise.

Sincerely,

Nedzu

He had meant to talk about it with Nedzu during his private lesson, but between their discussion about Todoroki and working on their plans to discredit Endeavor, it had completely slipped his mind. He had honestly been surprised at how many offers he had gotten and he could easily choose any of them, but...Nedzu was right. He had spent every minute since meeting Eraser and the others working to become proficient in combat, but his main advantage had always been his mind. His classmates would be using this week to hone their quirks, but he didn't have one of those, so his mind was the most important.

Besides, maybe if he went with Nedzu they'd be able to use the time to make a more detailed plan for Endeavor. He was still worried about how this whole thing would affect Todoroki, but Nedzu seemed to have something he was working on behind the scenes, so Izuku would have to be patient and wait until Nedzu let him in on his thoughts.

“Hey Deku!” Uraraka’s cheerful voice startled him out of his thoughts and Izuku looked up to see her smiling at him. “Wanna walk to the station together?”

“Sure!” Izuku hurried to put away his papers, not wanting to be left behind for whatever reason. It was just so surreal that he had *friends* now, and he didn’t want to do anything to jeopardize that, especially since Uraraka was his own age. His pro hero friends would always be special to him, but there was just something different about having people his own age actually *want* to hang out with him. He couldn’t imagine anyone at his middle school offering to walk home with him without using it as the set up for some mean prank. He was still struggling to wrap his head around it.

“We should invite Iida too!” Uraraka said. “Hey Iida...wait, did he already go home?”

“He probably already decided where he wants to do his internship and is turning in his paperwork.” Izuku said. “Should we wait for him?”

Uraraka nodded, “We should check by the lockers first, though, see if his stuff is gone. I hope he’s ok, after everything that happened with his brother…”

“Me too.” They started walking toward the lockers and Izuku tried to keep an eye out for Iida in case they passed him.

“So, have you decided who you’re going to intern with yet, Deku?”

“I think so…” Izuku said hesitantly. “But I got a lot of good offers, so it makes it hard to choose...”

“I know what you mean!” Uraraka opened her locker and started loading things into her backpack. “I honestly wasn’t expecting to get any offers at all!” She looked over at Izuku, who was staring at Iida’s empty locker. “Oh, did Iida already go home?”

“I guess so.” Izuku frowned, “Do you wanna just leave?”

“Yeah.” Uraraka adjusted her backpack so it sat higher up on her shoulders. “You ready?”

Izuku nodded and grabbed his own backpack, “So have you decided where you’re going?”

“Yep! I’m gonna intern with the pro hero Gunhead!”

Izuku stopped walking and stared at her, “Gunhead? Isn’t he combat based? I thought you wanted to be a rescue hero?”

“I do.” Uraraka said. “But he sent me an offer and I think it’ll be really good for me. I’ve been thinking about it since my fight with Bakugo at the sports festival and I’ve decided that I need to get stronger to be the kind of hero I want to be. An internship with Gunhead will give me a different perspective.”

Izuku smiled and started walking again, “That’s so cool, Uraraka! Gunhead will definatly help you be a better fighter. Who knows, maybe next time you fight Katsuki, you’ll be able to win!”

“A girl can hope.” Uraraka laughed. “So who did you decide on?”

“It’s kinda weird…”

“Ah, now you’re just making me curious!” Uraraka groaned. “Who is it? Tell me!”

Izuku chuckled, “I’m gonna be interning with Nedzu.”

Now it was Uraraka’s turn to stare at him in shock, “The principal? How did you manage *that* ? I didn’t even know he took interns.”

“He requested me specifically.” Izuku shrugged. “And I don’t know if he normally takes interns, but you know that I’m more focused on strategy than most heroes are, so it makes sense for me to intern with an intelligence based hero. I’ve already learned a lot from him this year, so I’m hoping this internship will kinda jumpstart things, you know? I don’t know, maybe I should go with a hero I’ve never worked with before and get a new perspective, like you said.”

“No!” Uraraka shook her head decisively. “Just because something works for me, doesn’t mean it’ll work for you. You’re one of the smartest people I know, Deku, I mean you came up with a winning strategy against Aizawa on our first day! So I think playing to your strengths is gonna be really good for you.”

“You really think so?”

Uraraka smiled, “Yeah! This is gonna be so much fun! Who do you think our friends are gonna go with?”

“Well, I don’t know about Iida, since he was probably planning on interning with his brother before everything happened.” Izuku

muttered. “Then Todoroki will probably intern with some sort of flame based hero if he plans to keep using his fire, but then again that’s his decision, so I don’t really know. Yaoyorozu said something about interning with Uwabami, I’m not sure it’s the best fit, but she’s really smart so I trust her judgement…”

“Where do you think Bakugo will go?” Uraraka asked.

“Oh, he’ll go with someone in the top ten if he got any offers from them.” Izuku said. “He always wanted to be the best.”

“Yeah, I can see that.” Uraraka laughed as they arrived at the station. “When does your train get here?”

“It should come in about ten minutes.” Izuku said, glancing at the clock on the wall. “What about yours.”

“Mine always comes at an awkward time.” Uraraka huffed. “I either barely make it, or barely miss it, it just depends on how fast I walked and...wait, that’s it! Bye, Deku!”

Izuku smiled as he watched Uraraka run toward the train as people piled in and laughed as he realized her backpack was floating slightly. She must have lightened it so she could run faster. She jumped between the doors right as they closed, then turned and waved to him as the train sped off. Izuku waved back, despite the fact that she was gone and couldn’t see him, then went to find a place to sit while he waited for his train.

He was so lucky to have friends.

“Hey brat!” Mom yelled from the kitchen, “You decided on an internship yet?”

“Leave me alone, hag!” Katsuki yelled back. “I’m still thinking about it! You should just be happy I got so many offers.”

“Yeah, I’m proud alright! You showed ‘em all at the sports festival!”

Katsuki looked at the handwritten list he’d made that put all his offers in order based on their hero ranking. The highest offer was Best Jeanist, who was the number four hero, so that’s who he should go with if he wanted to be the best, but Katsuki couldn’t get Hound Dog’s question from that afternoon off his mind.

What kind of hero did he want to be?

He'd always wanted to be the *best* hero, to be number one, but how much of that was pressure from his old teachers and how much of that was what he actually wanted? Maybe he should stop focusing so much on being the *best* . After all, Endeavor was only focused on being the best and look at where that got him.

So what kind of hero did he want to be? Or even what kind of person did he want to be? Ugh! Why was this so hard?

Well, he knew that he didn't want to change who was to fit what other people wanted. He didn't want to change his personality at all, and he definitely didn't want to be *nice* like Deku, so maybe he should find a hero that matched his personality?

If that was his plan, Best Jeanist was out. Yeah, he might be the best among the offers Katsuki had gotten, but he was just too...tame. Everything about Katsuki was wild, from his hair to his personality, so interning with Jeanist would be like trying to put a feral animal in a cage. It wouldn't end well. So did he get any other offers from the top ten? Yeah, he did. Miruko...who was that?

A quick search later and Katsuki was grinning. Miruko was currently number seven in the rankings, but rising fast and she was fierce. Like Katsuki, she wasn't afraid to speak her mind and she was more of a lone wolf than a rabbit, an image that would probably make the Mutt laugh at the irony. Katsuki didn't really know what kind of hero he wanted to be yet, but he knew that Miruko was pretty darn close.

So if Katsuki was a feral animal, why not intern with a wild rabbit?

"So even All Might's scared of this guy?" Nejire asked. "He must be pretty intimidating!"

"Yeah." Mirio said. "And I mean, I got other offers, so I don't *have* to intern with his Grand Torino guy, but who could pass up an opportunity to learn from the man who taught All Might?"

"You're going to die." Tamaki had been trembling ever since Mirio had told them how intimidated All Might was by even the *thought* of his old teacher. "Don't leave us alone, Mirio."

"Oh stop being so dramatic!" Nejire said. "I think you should do it! I believe in you!"

“Yeah, I think I will!” Mirio clenched a fist in determination. “Gran Torino, here I come!”

Shouta stared at the phone number Nedzu had slipped him during staff meeting. He had more than enough on his plate right now with internships and keeping his students safe from villains, he didn’t need anything else to worry about.

After a long moment, he sighed and dialed the number anyway. The teasing was never going to stop if he didn’t do anything about it and besides, how could he teach his students to do hard things and take risks if he didn’t have the courage to do the same.

The phone seemed to ring for an eternity before someone finally picked up. Shota took a deep breath. “Hey Emi, it’s me. I was wondering…”

Endeavor

Chapter Summary

People react to Izuku's latest article.

All for One frowned. The anonymous poster had published another article.

This poster seemed to be fixated on changing hero society, which put them in direct opposition to All for One's own goals. If hero society changed for the better, then those with powerful quirks wouldn't fall into his path through their own hubris, and those with weak quirks wouldn't be bribed with his promise of power. All for One had been around for long enough that he had helped *create* this system for his own ends, so he didn't take kindly to this upstart poster who was trying to *destroy* what he'd created!

The first two articles had been bad enough with the way they undermined the fundamental assumption of hero society, which was that the strong were inherently better than the weak, and accused society of creating their own villains, but then the poster had gone too far. They had actually called out a high ranking hero.

It was far from the first time that someone had criticized Endeavor's temper. In fact, it was a popular topic for new reporters before they realized that there was no point. Most people simply saw Endeavor's temper as part of his charm. This poster, however, already had an established reputation and had quickly built a kind of credibility that most journalists would kill for. When they brought up an issue, people listened.

Though perhaps All for One could use this to his advantage. If this poster was willing to see the flaws in heroes themselves, then perhaps he would be willing to fight the system more...violently. Yes, this poster wouldn't be too difficult to manipulate toward his ends. All it would take was telling them that Tomura's league shared their goals of exposing the flaws in society, from there it would simply be a slippery slope and the poster would forget about his noble goals all too quickly. It was a strategy that All for One had played out to perfection many times before.

The television in the corner crackled to life and Tomura looked up at

it in reverent excitement.

“Tomura.”

“Yes, Sensei?”

“The broker is coming for a visit later this afternoon, is that correct?”

“Yes, sir.” Kurogiri said. “I have already made all the necessary arrangements for the meeting.”

“That NPC is gonna tell us where to find our new party member!” Shigaraki said gleefully. “The hero killer is gonna send our stats through the roof!”

“Very good, Tomura.” Sensei said. “Although, while he’s here, I have one more thing I need you to ask him.”

“Anything.”

Sensei’s voice was smiling when he spoke again, “I’ve heard rumors of a man with a quirk that can identify any author. He reads a piece of writing and sees the author’s face in his mind. I would like your broker to track him down so I can meet him.”

Tomura squinted at the television, “Is he going to be a new party member like the hero killer?”

“No.” Sensei said. “But if all goes well, he’ll help me find a perfect ally for you. You know that everything I do is for you, Tomura.”

Tomura nodded and smiled, “Thank you Sensei. I will always be grateful that you found me that night and not some worthless hero.”

“Me too, Tomura.” Sensei said. “Me too.”

“Are you reading that article again?” Fuyumi asked hesitantly as she laid a stack of clean clothes on Shoto’s bed.

Shouto nodded, “It’s interesting.”

“Alright, just…don’t let Father catch you.”

“You don’t have to be worried, Fuyumi. Father hasn’t paid any attention to what this guy is saying since his first article. He’s of the opinion that if someone doesn’t agree with him they’re wrong, and if

they're wrong, then they're unimportant. I doubt he'd even care about the article if someone pointed it out to him."

"Just be careful, Shouto. I don't want you getting hurt because Father's angry."

"I still get hurt even when he's not angry." Shouto muttered.

"What was that?"

"Nothing, Fuyumi." Shouto said quickly. "Did you need anything else."

Fuyumi looked at him for a long moment before pursing her lips and shaking her head, "No. Goodnight, Shouto."

"Goodnight."

He waited until she'd closed the door before turning back to his phone and reading the article again. Sure, it wasn't the first time Endeavor had been criticized in the media, but it felt more important somehow. This guy already had a reputation for exposing truths that everyone else was too blind to see, so now that he was targeting Endeavor…

Fuyumi was right, though, Father wouldn't be happy if he realized Shouto was still reading the articles. Endeavor had only read the very first one, the one about discrimination hurting the gifted, and that had resulted in an hour long rant over dinner about how the writer was an idiot and should keep his *unresearched opinions to himself*.

According to Endeavor, the guy was obviously just some weak-quirked wannabe desperate for attention. The weak existed to serve the strong and provide a foothold for their journey to greatness, so there was obviously no way that *discrimination*, if there was a such a thing, could be hurting the gifted because, according to his father, such treatment was simply their right. Besides, it didn't matter if a few weaklings suffered, since it was the strong that made society function anyway.

Shouto didn't agree. That first article had hit a little too close to home, because as far as Shouto could see, he was much worse off because of his strong quirk. All those things his classmates had, like friends and freetime, had been taken away from him so that he could focus on training. The bruises he got from his father were all to make sure that he knew how to use his quirk. Everything that had ever gone wrong in his life, it seemed, was because of how Endeavor treated him because he was *strong*.

He hadn't related to the second article in the same way, since he had been homeschooled, but he could definitely see his old man encouraging him to put weaker classmates in their place and teaching him that they were less than human simply because of the way they were born. Had Midoriya had to endure that kind of treatment? Probably. Endeavor was *still* ranting about how they shouldn't have allowed a quirkless student into the hero course.

But Midoriya *had* gotten into the hero course. Shouto had seen Midoriya give his all to every exercise they did, so was it really fair for Shouto to continue holding back? It was *his* quirk, not his father's, so why did he still feel like he couldn't breathe every time he activated his left side?

He hadn't seriously used his left side since...well, that was why he'd used the time off after the sports festival to visit her. He hadn't known what he expected when he walked into his mother's room. Honestly, he'd really been expecting her to scream and attack him like she had when…

But she hadn't. She'd turned around and *smiled* at him. How could she smile when he looked more like Endeavor than he had back then? And even after almost eight years, she still recognized him, though that could have been the hair, but she still *saw* him as her son, as her little Shouto, not as some abomination his old man had created.

It had been awkward, of course. They hadn't seen each other in close to a decade and they'd both changed so much in that time that they couldn't just pick up where they left off. But Shouto didn't really do small talk either, so they just sat in silence for a few minutes, drinking in every detail about each other until Shouto finally blurted out why he had come.

"Mom? I don't want to be like him, but I don't want to keep holding myself back either. May I...I feel like I need your permission to fully use my fire again."

He'd almost just stood up and left at that moment. He hadn't seen his mother for years, she'd probably think he was being immature and weak for needing her permission to use his own quirk. He'd reminded himself of Midoriya, however, who said awkward things all the time, but somehow didn't let that deter him from making friends. So he stayed.

His mother had stared out the window for a long moment and Shouto

was starting to wonder if she'd even heard him when she finally responded.

"Do you still want to be a hero, Shouto?"

Shouto had paused. Had he ever really *wanted* to be a hero? But those words triggered some of his memories from the time before...times when he'd cuddled on his mother's lap and watched All Might save people on the news. Times when he'd really wanted to save people, even if no one had ever saved him.

He had looked at his mother in determination and nodded, *"Yes. I want to save people, but I don't want to be like him. Can I do both?"*

His mother had smiled, *"Of course you can, Shouto! I'm sorry that I...well, that I couldn't be there for you growing up, but I want you to know that I have always believed in you. You don't have to be like him to be a hero. You can be both kind and powerful, I know it. I'm so proud of you!"*

"So, may I have your permission to use my fire again?"

When Mom had nodded with tears in her eyes, Shouto finally felt free.

Kurogiri disappeared to find the hero killer as soon as Giran had left, and Tomura went to his room to play video games. He lovingly placed his family's hands on their table before sitting down on the couch and grabbing his controller. The hero killer would be the perfect addition to his party. He'd help Tomura kill the things he hated.

Anticipation

Chapter Summary

Shouta gets ready for a night on the town.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shouta started straightening his desk as his students rushed out the door at the end of the day. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Deku talking to Uraraka briefly before parting with her at the door and walking back into the classroom. Iida hadn't been leaving with them the last few days, which was strange, but unfortunately not unexpected considering what he was going through.

Insead of getting something he'd forgotten at his desk like Shouta had expected, Deku made a beeline for him, grinning, "So...tonight's the big night, huh?"

Shouta sighed, "How did you even know about that?"

"I know everything," Deku said innocently, "didn't you know?"

Shouta deadpanned and Deku laughed, "Fine! Joke wouldn't shut up about it. She even started a new chat without you in it just so she had a place to scream."

"Of course she did." Shouta muttered.

Deku sat down on the desk and started kicking his legs out like a little kid, "So, where are you taking her?"

"Like I'm really going to tell you that." Shouta glared at him. "You'll try to follow us and get pictures for blackmail purposes."

"Me? Never!" Deku paused thoughtfully. "Brave totally would though."

Shouta resisted the urge to roll his eyes, "Exactly. Even Emi doesn't know where we're going yet, so it would be utterly illogical to tell you just so you can post it in the group chat."

"Alright, keep your secrets." Deku stood and adjusted his backpack.

“But for the record, if I *did* follow, you wouldn’t even know I was there. Considering that you’re the one that did my stealth training, if you noticed, it would kinda be your own fault.”

Shouta glared at him, making Deku laugh again, “Fine! I promise I won’t tag along on your date. But at least tell me you’re planning on cleaning up a bit.”

Shouta raised an eyebrow, “And what’s wrong with what I normally wear?”

Deku shrugged awkwardly, “It’s just a little...grungy?”

“No offense, Deku, but I’m not about to take fashion advice from someone who thinks ironically labeled T-shirts are high fashion.”

“I never claimed they were high fashion…” Deku grumbled. “But please don’t wear sweats on the first date!”

“So I can wear them on the second?”

“Oh, so you want there to be second?

Shouta opened his mouth to respond before closing it again and frowning, hoping that Deku would miss his blush. From the satisfied look on Deku’s face, however, he hadn’t been so lucky.

“For your information, I actually *was* planning on cleaning up a little bit, not that it actually matters. Emi had seen me coming off a month-long mission when I hadn’t slept for three days, so, logically, it doesn’t matter how I look tonight because she’s already seen me at my worst.”

“Awww…” Deku smiled softly, “that’s the most romantic thing I’ve ever heard!”

“Shut up before I expel you.” Shouta grabbed his sleeping bag from under his desk and headed toward the door. “Shouldn’t you be trying to catch up to Uraraka? At this rate, she’ll beat you to the station.”

Deku’s eyes widened and he stammered out a goodbye as he rushed toward the door, but paused with his hand on the doorframe, “Oh, and Eraser? Don’t break her heart.”

Deku ran down the hall, leaving Shouta frozen back in the classroom. It wasn’t her heart he was worried about.

Ochako walked to the train station alone for her first time since coming to UA. It wasn't that she minded being alone, but, well, Iida had been practically avoiding them since the sports festival and Deku had said he needed to talk to Aizawa about something. She hoped it wasn't anything bad. She knew they were close, but there was still a part of her that was worried Deku was in trouble or something. It was just that Aizawa was so scary! He'd threatened to expel someone the first day and she could never really tell what he was thinking! He was just so strict that Ochako couldn't help being concerned for one of her best friends. She didn't think she'd ever understand how Deku actually became *friends* with their teacher.

But then again, Deku was really brave. The way he'd strategized against Aizawa that first day, and even stood against the villains at the USJ! He was always doing things that should be impossible with nothing but his brains, like when he destroyed the obstacle course at the sports festival. She hadn't really gotten the chance to tell him yet, but part of the reason she was able to go so hard in her fight against Bakugo was because of how Deku had inspired her in the first two rounds and made her feel like anything was possible. And he did all that without a quirk!

The sound of footsteps behind her startled Ochako from her thoughts and she whipped around to see Deku running toward her. She smiled as she waited for him to catch up. Looked like she wouldn't be walking alone after all.

"Sorry about that." Deku panted. "Ready to go?"

Uraraka nodded, "Is everything ok? What did you need to talk to Aizawa about?"

"Nothing important, just...well, I shouldn't really talk about it without his permission." Deku started walking toward the station and Ochako fell into step beside him.

"If you're trying to make me worry less, you're not doing very well." She pouted.

"Sorry." Deku smiled sheepishly. "It's nothing bad, I promise!"

"If you say so..." Ochako huffed. "So what do you think of the essay Midnight assigned? It's killer, right?"

Shouta fiddled with his bun again as he walked the last block to Emi's

apartment. Despite what he'd told Deku, he really wasn't sure what he was supposed to wear on a date. He hadn't really bothered much with socialization since...he shook his head. He really shouldn't be thinking about Shirakumo tonight, though if he were still around he'd probably be teasing Shouta relentlessly that he was finally going out with a girl. But he hadn't even wanted *friends* after that, so a girlfriend had been completely out of the question.

It didn't help his nerves that Shouta *knew* how bad his fashion sense was. He had more sweatpants in his closet than should probably be legal, and it had taken almost a half hour of digging until he found a pair of jeans that didn't look too worn out. They still had a few holes in them, and the black had faded to a dark grey, but they still looked acceptable and they were soft enough that Shouta wouldn't be uncomfortable the whole night, which was a necessity.

He'd debated whether he should wear a t-shirt or something nicer before finally just throwing on a dark blue button-up that Yamada had given him for his birthday a few years back. Emi was very fashion forward, and the last thing he wanted to do was embarrass her, so erring on the side of nicer was probably his best bet.

By the time he'd finally finished getting dressed, it had almost been time to leave, so he just pulled his hair back into a messy bun at the nape of his neck and called it good. As much as he knew it was illogical to worry about his appearance, he hoped it was enough.

He took a deep breath before stepping up to the door and knocking. He could have just had Emi meet him at the cafe, but Recovery Girl had spent the last week since learning of Emi's existence trying to literally knock some respect for tradition into his head, so he was picking her up. They'd take the train together and then…

His train of thought was interrupted when Emi opened the door. She looked at him in shock and Shouta was starting to wonder what he'd done wrong when she smiled.

"Well you clean up nice, don't you?"

Shouta swallowed thickly, "You too."

Emi laughed and closed the door behind her, "You're cute. So where are we going?"

She'd opted for a light pink dress with a ruffled skirt that fell to just above her knees and a halter neckline that was perfect for the warm

evening. If Shouta was being absolutely honest, she looked...really good. Shouta forced himself to stop staring and offered her his arm like Recovery Girl insisted he do. Emi looked surprised, but took his arm with a smile and let him lead her down the sidewalk.

“We’re going to one of my favorite cafes, actually. I hope you like cats.”

“Wait.” Emi stopped walking and dramatically brought one hand to her chest. “Is the ever stoic Eraserhead really taking me to a *cat cafe?* ”

“Are you done?” He deadpanned.

“Almost.” Emi grinned. “I didn’t know you were such a softy, Shouta.”

He rolled his eyes, “Yeah, I’m sure. Because the way we practically adopted a teenager wasn’t a dead giveaway.”

“Well, in your defense, Deku *is* pretty cute.”

“He had potential.”

Emi giggled, “And we’re back! Nice to know there’s a heart of gold buried underneath all that cold rationality.”

“And underneath *that* , is a smaller, more shriveled heart incapable of human emotion.”

“You’re a real riot, Shouta, you know that?” Emi slapped him lightly on the arm and Shouta wondered if hearts were supposed to skip beats like that? He should ask Recovery Girl, because that couldn't be healthy. It just seemed so illogical to have the body respond to attraction like that.

“It’s in Naruhata, so we’ll have to take the train, is that alright?”

Emi nodded and they walked the rest of the way to the train station in comfortable silence.

Chapter End Notes

> My deepest apologies for splitting this date into two chapters, but if I tried to fit everything I wanted into one chapter, it was going to be way longer than I like my chapters to be.

First Date

Chapter Summary

The cat cafe!

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! So this fic has reached 200,000 hits, which makes me super happy, even though I know most people pay more attention to kudos than hits! I did a Q&A to celebrate 100,000, so I wanted to do something for 200,000 as well, but it's not finished yet, so you guys get just to stew in suspense until the next update. Thank you all for being so awesome and enjoying this story!

Shouta frowned as they crammed onto the crowded train. He wished that they could have avoided rush hour, but it wasn't rational to change the whole date just to avoid strangers on the train. That didn't mean he had to like it.

"Oh, Shouta, your face!" Emi giggled.

"What's wrong with my face?"

"You look like a grumpy old cat!" Emi grinned. "You really are a misanthrope, aren't you?"

Shouta sent her a mock glare, "I am *not* a misanthrope, I just don't like people."

"That is literally the definition of misanthrope."

"No, a misanthrope is someone who *hates* people. I just severely dislike them."

"You hate reporters."

"Yes, well when you learn a word for a hatred of reporters besides *common sense,* let me know."

Shouta reached up and grabbed a hold of the bar to steady himself as the train started moving. Emi was quite a bit shorter, so she opted to keep a hold of Shouta's arm instead.

Emi looked up at him and rolled her eyes, "Just admit it, Shouta, you

don't like people and therefore, you're a misanthrope!"

"I like you don't I?"

Emi's face went bright red and Shouta's followed suit as soon as he realized exactly what he'd said. He cleared his throat and started looking anywhere but at her face. Deku would enjoy all the different quirks on this train, right? If he were here he would probably be analyzing…

"That was pretty smooth."

Shouta looked down and saw Emi smiling sweetly at him, which only made his blush more intense. He wished he'd brought his capture weapon so he could use it to hide, but no dice.

"Oh, um, thanks?" He responded eloquently.

Emi laughed, "Look at us, acting like a pair of teenage idiots. How many times have we seen our students poor attempts at flirting, yet here we are making all the same mistakes."

Shouta cocked his eyebrow, "You mean steadfastly ignoring each other only to stare at the other's back the moment they turn away?"

"Yes!" The train jostled stlightly and Emi tightened her grip on his arm, "There were these two students in my homeroom last year and literally *everyone* knew they liked each other! Every interaction ended in one of them blushing and running away, but they were still too dense to realize it. We'd even tease them about it, trying to push them together, but they were idiots. It drove me crazy!"

"Did they ever get together?"

Shouta gulped as Emi smiled mischievously, "Yep!

"Do I even want to ask?"

"It's not that bad, Shouta." Emi whined. "But let's just say that locking the supply closet so neither of them could run away did wonders."

Shouta laughed in spite of himself, "I can see Nedzu doing that to our students. It's a fairly simple solution to the problem."

"Simple, but effective." Emi nodded and grinned. "Glad it didn't come to that with us though."

“Oh?”Shouta cocked one eyebrow. “Do you not remember Midoriya-san trapping us on a shopping trip together?”

She shoved him slightly with her shoulder, “That’s just standard wing-manning.”

Shouta rolled his eyes, “You didn’t need her help to confess your feelings.”

“What made you think she was helping *me?”* Emi glanced up at him and Shouta’s eyes widened.

“That’s not…I..no…what?”

Emi started laughing again, “Oh, you’re so cute! You’re so easy to tease, Shouta!”

“Shut up…” Shouta grumbled. “It’s not fair.”

“Too bad,” Emi said in mock seriousness, “the world is full of unfairness! It’s a hero’s job to combat that unfairness.”

He glared at her, “You can’t quote me just to make fun of me.”

“Just did.” She pulled him down by his collar. “So what are you gonna do about it?”

“Next stop Naruhata Center.”

Shouta jolted slightly as the train came to a stop, “T-this is us.”

Emi pouted slightly, but let go and followed the trickle of people getting off the train. Shouta didn’t even have to think as he led her down the familiar streets. He glanced down at her, unsure of what to say after that…moment on the train. She hadn’t reached up to take his arm again either, which meant that he’d probably messed things up. Dang it. Maybe he should…

“Didn’t you spend a few years here before you started teaching?” Emi’s voice cut through his spiral and he forced himself to take a deep breath.

He nodded and pointed to one of the side streets they were passing, “Over there is where I met the Crawler for the first time. He was a good kid. A bit misguided sometimes, but he and the other vigilantes did a lot of good around here.”

Emi smiled and Shouta gradually relaxed again as she kept asking questions until he found himself almost rambling about his time in Naruhara. It didn't take long at all for them to reach their destination, which was just on the edge of the warehouse district. He was about to lead her inside when she stopped and stared at the giant building.

"Are you sure this is a cafe, Shouta?" She asked hesitantly. "There's no way a cat cafe would be so big. You're not just gonna lead me into a warehouse to kill me, right?"

Shouta chuckled, "It'll make sense once we're inside, I promise."

She looked at him skeptically, but took his hand and let herself be pulled into the cafe. Inside, dozens of people lounged on the various levels of the cafe and the cats particularly seemed to like having a lot of vertical space to explore. A few of the older cats immediately came up to Shouta and started batting at his pant legs and sniffing to see if he'd brought them any treats.

"Hey, Eraser! Long time no see! The cats missed you."

Emi's eyes widened as she caught sight of the giant mantis of an employee that was greeting them with a smile. If she met him on the street, she probably would have been intimidated just by his sheer size, but he oddly didn't seem out of place among the cats and quaint atmosphere of the cafe.

"I can see that, Kirihito. Spoiled brats." Shouta said fondly. "How is business?"

"Booming as ever...wait, who…" Kirihito blinked a few times as he took in Emi and his eyes zeroed in on their joined hands. "Are you on a *date?!"*

Shouta scowled, "Maybe this was a bad…"

"Yo, Takobe, get out here! Eraserhead's on a date!"

Emi laughed so hard that she started snorting as a massive man with an octopus quirk threw open the doors to the kitchen and made a beeline for them as Shouta started trying to pull her back out of the cafe. She simply tightened her grip on his hand and widened her stance to anchor herself in place.

"Oh my god!" Takobe grinned and bowed to Emi, making her laugh harder. "You have tamed the beast! I didn't think I'd ever see the day.

You must be some kind of miracle worker, miss. We need to tell the Hotta brothers, they're not gonna believe this!"

"I already texted them." Kirihito said. "They're on their way."

"Either give us a table or get out." Shouta said irritably.

"Of course, of course!" Kirihito said. "We've got the perfect table for you two lovebirds if you're okay with stairs. It's one of the upper level seats perfect for little people like you."

He led them to a small staircase that led up to a tiny balcony that was just big enough for a table for two. It was also at the intersection of several of the cat walkways that ran around the walls, so cats were constantly running along and jumping onto the small platform and taking the staircase down to the floor. The balcony was only about ten feet off the ground, though, so Kirihito was able to stand on the main level and still see their table to take their order if he stood up to his full height.

Once she and Shouta were seated, Kirihito leaned over toward Emi conspiratorially, "I gotta say, miss, you've got yourself a real catch once you get past that ugly frown on his face."

She smiled at Shouta who was still scowling even though his face was pink with embarrassment, "Oh, I know."

"Did you know that he gave us our first cat?"

Emi gasped with delight, "I did not!"

"I remember one time…"

"Thank you!" Shouta said suddenly, "I'll have the black brew, and she'll have the calico combo. Now go!"

Kirihito winked at her, but left and Shouta slammed his head down on the table, "I shouldn't have brought you here."

"Oh no, coming here was *definitely* the right decision."

Emi couldn't bring herself to stop grinning even when Shouta started glaring at her, "You are incorrigible."

"Aww, but you love me anyway!"

Shouta blushed and pretended to be reading the menu despite the fact

that they had already ordered. She'd thought she enjoyed teasing him when all she got from it was glares, but this was even better!

After a few minutes of this she decided to finally take pity on him and change the subject, "So this cafe is so big because of the staff, right?"

Shouta nodded, "Yeah, Kirihito was always complaining about how he couldn't really fit anywhere because he was so big, mostly because he just wanted an ax to grind, but then he met Takobe and the rest was history. They try to hire people with larger builds to give them opportunities that they wouldn't have anywhere else and they've even converted some of the surrounding warehouses into giant apartments that they manage. They'd done well for themselves here."

"If I didn't know better, I'd almost say you were *proud* of them."

Shouta scoffed, but a slight smile gave him away, "Well then, I guess it's a good thing you know better."

What a softy.

It was at that moment that Kirihito returned with their drinks and a small bag of treats to feed the cats. The drinks were so cute! Emi quickly took out her phone and snapped a picture, then extended her arm to take a selfie.

"Smile, Shouta!"

Shouta frowned, "I don't smile."

Kirihito grinned at Emi, then picked up one of the cats that was running past and plopped it down on top of Shouta's head right as Emi snapped the picture. The resulting disgruntled expression wasn't a smile, but it was funny enough to make up for it. Emi didn't waste any time typing out a message and sending the picture to the group chat.

Shouta's phone vibrated and he looked down at the notification before turning to him with the most done look on his face, "Seriously? You had to send them that one?"

"Well, you could have smiled."

"That would arguably have been worse."

Emi laughed, "Oh yes, because you still like to pretend you have a reputation to uphold."

“I *do* have a reputation to uphold.”

“Around us? Your closest friends?” She giggled. “Sorry, Shouta, but that ship sailed a long time ago.”

Shouta’s eyes narrowed, “And what makes you so sure of that?”

Emi smiled and took a sip of her drink, “Kitten pajamas.”

Shouta’s eyes widened in shock before he scowled, “That little…”

Emi laughed again, “I think it’s cute!”

Shouta groaned and buried his face in the cat that had moved from his head to his lap, “People used to respect me.”

“But wouldn’t you rather have friends than respect?” Emi asked innocently.

Shouta glared at her, “That depends on what you say next.”

“You’re just too fun to tease, Shouta!”

Shouta looked at her for a long moment before taking out his phone. Emi leaned forward to try to get a look at the screen, but he just stood up to keep it out of her reach.

“What are you doing?”

“The thing you forgot, Emi, is that relationships go both ways.”

Emi felt her stomach drop. Had she teased too much? What if she ruined it? Was Shouta really just going to leave her here? They were never going to have a second date much less get married and what would their friends…

She was knocked out of her thoughts as a cat landed on her head. She looked up at Shouta, who was staring at her with a self-satisfied smirk on his face, then felt her phone vibrate. The picture that he had just sent to the group chat captured her shocked expression perfectly and she couldn’t help it as she dissolved into giggles.

“Touche, Eraser, Touche.”

The cat jumped off her lap and onto the ground, and Emi ended up following, grabbing one of the cat toys that was on the table and pushing back her chair so she had room to sit on the ground as the cat

pounced on the feather she was dangling in front of it.

Shouta smiled as he watched Emi play with the cat, then grabbed the cat treats and started throwing them down near her until she was surrounded by half a dozen cats climbing all over her as she pet them and played with them. How did he get so lucky to get a girl like her?

He stopped dead in his thoughts, Emi blissfully unaware of the mini-crisis he was having just a few feet away. What was that? He...well, yes, he liked her, but she was the one that had flirted with him first! It wasn't like he was just the luckiest man in the world that she chose him and it *definitely* wasn't that he loved her or anything…

Oh... *Oh no* . He hadn't signed up for this.

"Shouta? Shouta, are you ok?"

He shook himself out of his spiral and saw Emi looking at him, concerned, the cats around her batting at her trying to get her to play again. He must have spaced out longer than he thought.

"Shouta?" She asked again. "What's wrong?"

There were a lot of things he could say that would be logical responses. Unfortunately, his brain to mouth filter chose that moment to fail spectacularly, "It's unfair of you to seduce me with cats."

She stared at him for a long moment before she started laughing, "You're the one who brought me here! If anything you're the one seducing me!"

"Wait, our man Eraser is actually seducing someone? Oh man, I thought those guys were just playing a joke!"

Shouta tore his eyes away from Emi to see the Hotta brothers grinning at them from the top of the stairs. Oh no, he really shouldn't have chosen this place for their first date.

"Oh man! To think that our main annoyance has an annoyance of his own!" One of them said, wiping a fake tear from his eye,

"Our little nuisance is growing up!" The other said. "We're so proud!"

"Ok, we're leaving."

Emi laughed and let Shouta help her up, "It's always a pleasure to meet Shouta's friends! I knew he couldn't be a grumpus *all* the time!"

Shouta left a few bills on the table to cover the cost of the coffee before pushing her toward the door, the others following and taking pictures to *get photographic evidence of the impossible.*

As they reached the door, Emi turned around and waved, “See you again soon!”

“No, we won’t.” Shouta muttered. “I’m never going to be able to show my face there again.”

“Oh, stop being so dramatic, Shouta. It was fun!”

He sighed, “Fine, it wasn’t absolutely terrible. Happy?”

She leaned up to kiss him on the cheek and smiled as he blushed, “Very.”

Shouta cleared his throat and checked the time on his phone, “Umm, there’s a train that leaves in fifteen minutes. We should hurry if we don’t want to miss it.”

“Lead the way.”

They walked back through the streets of Naruhata much more comfortably than they had the first time. At some point Emi had reached over and grabbed Shouta’s hand and he hadn’t let go yet, so she was going to count that as a win. Then, as they were passing one of the shopping districts, everything exploded.

Literally.

Heroes First and Always

Chapter Summary

These two idiots finally finish their date.

Chapter Notes

Yay! So last chapter I promised you guys a surprise to celebrate 200,000 hits and here it is!
I decided to use this as an excuse to write my first bnha one-shot, and Izuku actually has a quirk in this one! It takes place in the canon universe, but Izuku has to deal with the world finding out about One for All.
Also, some fanart of the EraserJoke date!

Shouta blinked and tried to concentrate despite the ringing in his ears. He looked over to see Emi on the ground beside him in a similar state, her pink dress smudged with soot. They looked over to where the explosion had come from to see a man and a woman in matching black vests striding out of a strip mall, duffle bags in hand. There wasn't any physical indication of either of their quirks, but Shouta was willing to bet that at least one of them had something to do with explosions. But he taught Bakugo, he could handle this.

"Alright people!" One of the villains threw her duffle on the ground, revealing a fair bit of cash already inside. "Put your valuables in the bag, unless of course you'd like a repeat of what happened inside…"

Shouta felt his stomach sink. What had happened inside? Were there survivors? He glanced around, but didn't see any on duty heroes yet. Of all the days to leave his capture weapon at home! He glanced over at Emi, who nodded and activated her quirk. She wouldn't be able to aim it as accurately without her mask, so some civilians might end up with sore abs from watching the fight, but it was better than another explosion.

Aizawa was already charging forward by the time the villains burst into laughter. He made sure to keep both villains in his sight, since he didn't know which one had the explosion quirk, but he ran toward the woman first, since she appeared to be the one in charge. He managed to sweep her legs out from under her, making her cry out as she grabbed a ball from one of her pockets.

“Wrong choice.” She giggled. She still somehow sounded threatening despite the effect Emi’s quirk was having on her. “You should have just obeyed.”

She tossed the ball at him and her eyes widened as the ball bounced harmlessly away.

“Joke, this one has the explosion quirk! You take care of the other one.”

“Got it, Eraser!” He turned his back on the man and focused his attention on making sure the woman was out of commision. She had managed to get back to her feet, but Shouta was much better at hand-to-hand than she was and had her prone on the ground in no time. He straddled her back and extended her hands out on either side of her, holding her wrists down with her palms facing up so she couldn’t touch anything and make it explosive. He made sure she couldn’t get out before he let himself blink.

“Stop!” The man called from behind them and Shouta whipped around to see him holding a ball like the woman had, but this one was glowing purple. Shit, the villains had matching quirks, they must be related. “Let her get up, or the girl gets it!”

He held the bomb threateningly toward Emi, who was glancing between the two cautiously. Shouta swore under his breath. He could just cancel the villain’s quirk and the bomb would probably defuse itself, but there was always the possibility that the bomb would simply explode the moment that the villain lost control of it. With this many civilians around, he couldn’t take that risk. From the look on Emi’s face, she had come to the same conclusion.

Shouta watched out of the corner of his eyes as Emi reached for something in the pockets of her dress, before glancing at him, then up to the sky. He glanced at the male villain one last time before nodding and holding his hands up in surrender, “Alright…”

The moment the villain relaxed even slightly, Emi ran forward and kicked the bomb out of his hand like it was a kickball, launching it skyward where it could detonate safely if it exploded. Shouta slammed the woman’s wrists against the floor again and almost immediately canceled the man’s quirk. Emi was already moving to punch him in the face, the street lights glinting off her knuckle-dusters as the ball fell out of the sky and bounced harmlessly on the ground a few times. So his quirk *had* defused it. Oh well, better safe than sorry.

Within seconds, Emi had the man on the ground in the exact same position as his partner. Shouta could hear sirens over the screams of the watching civilians and he sighed. He hadn't wanted to do paperwork that night. A pair of officers came up and looked at the situation in shock.

Shouta just looked at them in exhaustion, "These two were attempting a robbery and were responsible for the explosion. We don't know what the situation is inside, but there are most likely casualties."

The officers looked toward the crowd as if to confirm his story, but didn't seem to see anything in the civilians' faces' to say anything else because they each started approaching one of the villains. Shouta leaned back to allow the officer to put the woman in quirk-suppressant cuffs, and saw Emi doing the same thing with her villain.

When the villains were secure, he helped the officer lead them to the car, then started making his way toward Emi as ambulances arrived and paramedics started checking on the situation inside the exploded strip mall.

"Not so fast, you two. Hands on your heads."

Shouta and Emi both glanced toward the senior officer in confusion, "What?"

The officer frowned, "I'm sure you two are already aware that your actions here constitute vigilantism. While I'm sure these nice people are very grateful and you did do a decent job resolving the incident, we still have to take you in."

Shouta blinked a few times in shock. Were...were they being accused of being *vigilantes?* He suddenly realized that both he and Emi were in civilian clothes and that they were both underground heroes outside their usual patrol routes. For all intents and purposes, it looked like they were just two unusually competent civilians that had taken down a pair of villains. Emi started laughing her head off and Shouta just groaned as the officers glared at them. This night literally couldn't get any more exhausting.

He sighed and reached for his wallet, making the officers tense, "Don't worry. I'm just getting my wallet."

The officers didn't look any less suspicious, but Shouta kept his movements slow and obvious and they didn't make any move to attack him, so it seemed like that was as good as he was going to get.

He flipped his wallet open and grabbed his hero license, then handed it to the senior officer, who looked at it suspiciously, then glanced toward Emi, “She have one too?”

Emi nodded and got out her license, then handed it to the other officer. The two glanced between the two licenses, then up at the two heroes. They didn’t look any less suspicious.

“Well, *Eraserhead,* ” the senior officer said contemptuously, “I’ve never heard of you. How do I know this isn’t just a fake?”

“I don’t know,” his partner said slowly, “Ms. Joke sounds kinda familiar…”

Shouta frowned, “We’re underground heroes.”

“Still,” the senior officer said, “I think we’d better take you in until we can confirm your identities…”

“Seriously?” Shouta scoffed. “Just call Detective Tsukauchi over in Musutafu, he’ll know it’s us.”

The officer glanced over toward Emi, who nodded, then toward his partner, who did the same, before pulling out his phone, “Hello? Yeah, can you patch me over to Tsukauchi? The Musutafu division. Yeah, I’ll wait.” He glanced over at them again and Shouta gave him a venomous glare, which made Emi laugh and the officer turned away quickly, “Hello, is this Detective Tsukauchi? No, there’s no problem, I just have two people here claiming to be heroes and was hoping you could verify that. Yes, um, Eraserhead and Ms. Joke? Well, yes, they *do* appear to be dressed for a date. No, they resolved the incident without any collateral damage. Yes, I’ll send the paperwork right over.”

The officer hung up and smiled sheepishly, “It, uh, appears that everything is in order, Eraserhead, sir. Um, Tsukauchi requested that I send the paperwork to him so you can complete it after…” he cleared his throat awkwardly, “after your date. Umm, congratulations?”

Shouta glared at him again as Emi tried to hold back her laughter, “Come on, Shouta, these guys have the situation under control. Let’s go home.”

Shouta sighed, but let her drag him away, “They’re idiots. And we already missed our train, so there’s reason to rush.”

“The reason to rush,” Emi grinned, “is that if we waited around for them to stick their feet in their mouths again, you were going to *actually* get arrested for assaulting an officer.”

“Not my fault they couldn’t even recognize an official hero license.” Shouta scoffed.

Emi looked at him and started giggling uncontrollably. He tried turning his glare on her, but that just made her laugh harder.

“What?” He asked finally.

“It’s just,” she laughed, “we couldn’t even manage to go on one date without running into villains!”

Shouta rolled his eyes, “I guess that’s the curse of being a hero. Even off duty, you never get a moment’s peace.” He stopped. “Wait, it’s always going to be like this, isn’t it?”

She glanced up at him, “Well, yeah. We’re heroes.”

He frowned, “Wouldn’t you rather have someone calmer? Some normal guy with a good sense of humor that wouldn’t have to run off and chase dangerous villains all the time?”

“First of all,” the look in her eyes was so determined that Shouta had to resist the urge to take a step back, “you *do* have a sense of humor. It might be practically a cryptid, but it exists. Second of all, I like you *because* you’re a hero, Shouta! If I was with any other guy back there, civilians could have gotten hurt. I don’t want someone *calm* , I want someone who can fight alongside me. We’re always going to be heroes first, but would you really have it any other way?”

He looked down at her in shock. Her eyes were practically glowing as she panted in the wake of her speech. He could just barely see the light blush on her cheeks in the dim light of sunset. Her face was still streaked with soot and her hair was tangled and blowing in the evening breeze. He didn’t think he’d ever seen someone more beautiful.

Slowly, he brought his hand up to cup her cheek, using his thumb to wipe away some of the soot, but he really only succeeded in smearing it. Her eyes widened as he smiled softly and leaned down.

“No, I wouldn’t.” He murmured.

Then he kissed her.

Trauma

Chapter Summary

Todoroki needs therapy.

Shouto had never been to a therapist's office before because Endeavor saw any mental instability as a sign of weakness, but if he'd had to guess what one would look like, he probably would have imagined something with argyle throw pillows, ink blot paintings, and a mild mannered man with thick glasses asking him about his feelings.

Needless to say, Hound Dog's office was nothing like that.

Sure, it had a couch and a few pillows, but they were plain and tasteful, something even his father would allow around the house, and Hound Dog was about as far from mild mannered as one could get. Which of course led to the question of why he had become a therapist in the first place, but Shouto had other questions to answer first, starting with how he had ended up in Hound Dog's office in the first place.

"Why am I here?" He tried to ask politely, but it probably came out blunt. Yaoyorozu said he always ended up sounding ruder than he intended.

Hound Dog didn't seem offended though, he simply replied just as bluntly, "Because it's come to my attention that things aren't great for you at home."

Shouto frowned. Had Midoriya said anything? He'd assumed that the conversation would stay between them, and he wasn't quite sure how to feel about the fact that that apparently wasn't the case. On the one hand, it seemed like a breach of trust, but on the other, Midoriya probably thought he was looking out for him. If his father ever found out, however…

"Things are fine."

Hound Dog sighed, "No, they're not. I promise you that I'm not going to tell your family that you came to visit me, but I need you to be honest with me."

Shouto didn't answer. He may have had to come because Nedzu said

so, but he would just have to convince the principal there had been some mistake. He looked out the window rather than at Hound Dog. What was all that construction for? They'd started it a few days ago and Shouto knew they could probably build faster than they were, but they didn't seem to be in any rush.

"Midoriya didn't tell me, by the way." Hound Dog broke the silence. "I just thought you'd want to know that I found out about your conversation through someone else. Never underestimate the number of eyes and ears around UA."

Shouto nodded. The principal must have been listening in somehow then. Endeavor always said Nedzu was a creepy little rat who knew far more than he had any right to, so it made sense that he had cameras planted around UA. Shouto wished he'd known that before, but there was nothing he could do about that now.

"You don't have to tell me anything if you don't want to." Hound Dog continued. "I just want to let you know that I'm here when you need me."

"Thank you, but there's no point." Shouto said. "My father is untouchable."

Hound dog nodded, "Sadly, yes. Endeavor is the number two hero and arresting him right now would cause irreversible damage to society. If that weren't the case, we would have already done something. Unfortunately, there's nothing we can do about that. We live in a messy world and all we can do is do the best we can with what we've got."

Shouto wished Hound Dog could have said something different. He'd always wished for a hero to come and save him from the abuse, but here one was who finally knew, but still couldn't save him, "Then why am I here?"

"We may not be able to arrest your father right now, but that doesn't mean we can't address the effects his treatment has had on you." Hound Dog said. "I'd like to help you be more emotionally resilient by working through your trauma…"

"Trauma?" Shouto knew it was rude to interrupt, his father had been very clear about that growing up, but he couldn't help it. Sure he hadn't had the best childhood and his father sucked, but he wasn't *traumatized* .

Hound Dog glanced at his sympathetically, “Yes, trauma. Have you wondered why you have a harder time showing emotion than your classmates do? Or maybe why you can’t help but tense up and shut down around new people, despite the fact that they’re harmless?”

Shouto thought for a moment. He’d always thought it was strange how expressive Yaoyorozu was, and then he’d come to UA and had almost been overwhelmed by how much emotion people like Uraraka and Kirishia showed. Even Hagakurei was expressive in her own way and she was invisible!

Hound Dog must have realized he hit the mark because he continued, “Those are signs of psychological trauma, Todoroki. But it doesn’t have to be that way. We can’t change what happened to you in the past, but we can work toward recovery. How does that sound?”

Shouto shrugged. It sounded...good, but he still wasn’t really sure what the point was, “What’s wrong with the way I am now?”

Hound Dog looked at him sympathetically, “Are you happy?”

“I’m going to be a hero.” Shouto said simply. “I don’t need to be happy for that.”

Hound Dog nodded, “But do you want to be?”

Shouto froze. Did it really matter what he wanted? Endeavor had never really cared about what he wanted, so Shouto assumed no one ever would. After his mother was sent away, he’d almost stopped wanting things entirely, since there was no way he’d get what he wanted and the emotion was just too painful to keep around. Sure, he’d refused to use his fire, but that was more about what he *didn’t* want, which was to end up like his father. Was this what Hound Dog meant by emotional trauma?

He stared out the window for another long moment. Did he want to be happy? He wanted to use his fire to be a good hero now. He wanted to save people. He wanted…

“I want to be friends with Midoriya and the others.” He said finally. “I’m not sure I need to be happy to accomplish my goals, but they’re good people and I want to understand them, if nothing else.”

Hound Dog smiled, “That’s a good start, Todoroki. I’ll help you do that.”

“And you promise not to tell Endeavor?” Shouto asked. “He doesn’t approve of *friends* .”

“Cross my heart and hope to die.” Hound Dog said. “But speaking of your father, there’s one last thing I wanted to talk to you about before you leave. You signed up to go to Endeavor’s agency for your internship. Why?”

“I need to master fire.” Shouto said. “Father is the best at fire.”

“I’ll give you that.” Hound Dog said slowly. “But there are other flame users who haven’t been abusing you your whole life, you could have chosen any one of them. I’m sure you got offers.”

Shouto nodded. He *had* received offers from other flame users, but accepting their offers didn't feel right and Shouto didn’t want to deal with the fit his father would throw if he chose to learn fire from someone else.

“This is a non-issue.” He said finally. “It’s too late to change my decision anyway. Internships start next week.”

“We could pull some strings if we needed to.” Hound Dog responded. “And I’m sure Nedzu could come up with an excuse that would appease even your father if you wanted to switch.”

Shouto thought for a moment. It was definitely tempting, but on the other hand, “I want to stay. I need to master my fire side and Endeavor’s quirk is the most similar to mine. If I expect to be the best hero I can be, I can’t hold myself back simply because I refuse to spend time with him.”

Hound Dog didn’t necessarily look convinced, but he didn’t protest, “Alright. But if he’s too hard on you or you ever fear for your safety, call me. I’m here to help, even if you just need to talk. Alright?”

Shouto nodded and stood, “Thank you.”

Hound Dog let him out and Shouto made his way back toward the classroom for the rest of free period. Uraraka smiled at him as he came in and Iida didn’t even look up, too busy scolding Midoriya and Yaoyorozu, who were doing some experiment with her quirk while Shinso watched with a bored expression. Shout wasn’t quite sure how to feel about everything yet, but he’d have to at least give therapy a chance.

Kurogiri handed All for One the phone and he smiled as he held it to his ear.

“Hello?”

“Am I speaking to Shigaraki’s Sensei?”

“You must be the broker.” All for One said. “Did you find the man I requested?”

“Sure did.” Giran said. “You’re lucky, he’s not an easy man to find, but his quirk is Authorship Identification, just like you wanted. Like yourself, he’s pretty busy, but I managed to make an appointment for him to see you in two weeks. I’m sending him to the bar, right?”

“No.” All for One said. “I want to see him *personally*. I’ll have Kurogiri bring him here.”

A Trip of a Thousand Miles Begins with One Step

Chapter Summary

Internships begin.

Hitoshi didn't really understand why they all had to go to the train station together, but he figured it must have something to do with liability and making sure people didn't sue the school or something. Or maybe it was just that Aizawa didn't trust them to actually leave on time if they were left to their own devices. He could see some of the other students sleeping in and missing the train or getting lost or something, but they were hero students, so they should be better than that, right?

Well, it didn't really matter, because they were all here, clustered around Aizawa as he lectured them on professionalism and politeness. Hitoshi adjusted his grip on the case for his brand new hero costume. He still hadn't gotten the chance to wear it, so he hoped it would fit correctly and look okay. He didn't know that much about costume design, so besides the voice changer, he'd mostly left that up to the support department. As long as they didn't put him in skin-tight spandex, he'd be fine.

The class scattered to their various platforms as Aizawa finished his lecture, leaving only Hitoshi and his teacher by the doors. Aizawa sighed loudly and ran a hand through his hair, "Good riddance. Nobody had better get in trouble this week, I really don't want to have to deal with the paperwork." He glanced down at Hitoshi, who instinctively stood up a little straighter. "You ready to go?"

Hitoshi nodded and fell into step behind his teacher. He was still having trouble believing that he was actually in the hero course, much less that he was interning with Eraserhead, who had been his favorite hero practically ever since he'd learned about him. He'd gone through a phase near the end of elementary school where he had intensely researched every hero with any quirk that could be seen as villainous just so he could prove his bullies wrong. It hadn't really worked because it turns out they just liked being mean and no amount of reason and evidence was going to convince them to be nice, but it had given Hitoshi hope that his dream wasn't as impossible as it seemed, so it had still been pretty useful.

“So, Shinso, how are you getting along with your classmates.” Aizawa asked

Hitoshi hadn’t really pegged Eraserhead as one for smalltalk, but he supposed life was full of surprises. His classmates were nice, but…maybe they were *too* nice. It just seemed like it was only a matter of time before they stopped wanting to hang out with the *villain*. Maybe Midoriya was the exception to the rule, considering his own quirk situation, but he still didn’t trust the others.

Instead of going into all that, he just shrugged and repeated the mantra he’d had since he came to UA, “I’m not here to make friends.”

Aizawa scoffed, “Yeah, good luck with that. You’re planning on going underground, right?”

Hitoshi nodded, “It makes the most sense with my quirk.”

“I agree. I can think of a dozen situations off the top of my head where your quirk will come in handy. But I’m gonna give you a word of advice.” He stopped walking and stared at him intensely. “I was like you early on. I was fiercely independent and thought friendships would only hold me back. But over the years, I’ve learned that underground heroes are a tight knit community. We rely on each other to stay alive in ways that daylight heroes don’t have to worry about. I’m not saying that you have to make friends, but I am saying that you should be open to the possibility, because there’s going to come a time when you’re going to have to trust your colleges to have your back, and that’s a lot easier to do when you actually trust them.”

It took a few seconds for Hitoshi to realize that Aizawa had already started walking again and he had to jog to catch up. What was *that?* Eraserhead was known to be independent and harsh, he didn’t have friends, did he? He didn’t need them! At least, that’s what Hitoshi had always believed, but that’s not what Aizawa had said. Hitoshi frowned, maybe he *should* be more open, but… maybe he could test it out. He hadn’t come here to make friends, but allies would undeniably be useful, so he’d start with Midoriya, and then if that didn’t work out, he would never have to do it again. That would work.

Aizawa led him to a nondescript building in one of the poorer parts of town, just a neighborhood or two away from UA. He pulled out a key and let Hitoshi inside.

“Welcome to my agency, kid. That door’s the bathroom. Get into your hero costume and meet me in the gym at the end of the hall. We need

to see where your combat abilities are at."

Hitoshi nodded and hurried to get dressed.

Izuku frowned at the key and piece of paper that Nedzu had given him during their last lesson. The paper was supposed to be an address, but...apparently Nedzu had decided that the best way to start his internship was with a riddle. Izuku wasn't complaining, he liked riddles! He just wished that he didn't have to drag around his luggage while trying to find where Nedzu lived. It would just have to count as muscle training, right? Oh, and the riddle was in English, so there was that.

Though I am only two words, I have thousands of letters.

Two words...thousands of letters...maybe it had something to do with the longest word in the English language? A quick internet search later and Izuku was back to square one. The longest word referred to some kind of lung disease, but he didn't think that was quite what Nedzu was going for. Hmmm....well, a lot of riddles relied on puns or wordplay. Was this Nedzu's way of telling him not to slack off in Mic's class?

Ok, words didn't have two meanings, nor did thousands, so...maybe letters? Letters were characters in English writing, but they must have another meaning as well. He hoped that Nedzu wouldn't get too mad at him for running the word through his translate app, but he was just using all his resources, right? And...there! Letters were also what was sent in the mail! So two words...thousands of letters...post office!

Izuku grinned and started toward Musutafu post office. He wondered what Nedzu would have waiting for him there, because that obviously wasn't his final destination. Was this going to be a full-on scavenger hunt? He looked at the key again. Yeah, that seemed like something Nedzu would do.

When he reached the post office, Izuku looked around for his next clue, but didn't see anything obvious. He could always ask the people at the desk, but he didn't know if Nedzu would have wanted to include other people on his hunt. Izuku pinched his lip as he thought about what Nedzu might have in mind. What had he given him? Just the note and...Izuku looked over toward the PO boxes, then grabbed the key from his pocket. Sure enough, there was a number engraved on the handle.

Izuku found the right box and turned the key, smiling slightly when he heard the lock click. He opened the door and grabbed what was inside. A puzzle box. He locked the PO box again and made his way outside where he could find a bench to sit on while he figured out how to open it. Hmm, maybe if he moved that piece to the left, then that other piece down, then…

It took him almost twenty minutes to solve the box, which he hoped wasn't too much longer than Nedzu had predicted. He didn't want to disappoint his mentor when Nedzu had been so eager to have him for internships. But maybe he'd planned on it taking that long. The first riddle had been pretty easy, so Nedzu had probably put in a variety of different difficulties.

The only thing inside the puzzle box was a note written on the same stationary as the first clue and Izuku realized that it was another riddle.

There is a place we go for a walk

The children play and we can talk

Find this place if you want a lark

The answer you seek is in the …

At the train station, Shouto had heard a few of his classmates worrying that they'd get lost on the way to their internships. He didn't have that issue, considering that he was just going home. He'd been hesitant to intern with his father, but...if he was going to use his flames, he needed to learn how to use them and his father was the best flame user in Japan. But just because he'd decided that this was the best option didn't mean he was necessarily looking forward to this week, especially the *training*.

Endeavor was already waiting for him when he arrived, so Shouto changed into workout clothes as quickly as he could and made his way to the training room. He opted for a tank top and shorts this time, since he would be practicing his fire rather than his ice this time, which meant that between his flames and his father's, it would most likely get very hot, very quickly. He took a deep breath and opened the door. It would only be one week.

“I’m glad you’ve finally come to your senses, Shouto.” Endeavor grinned. “This week will be invaluable when it comes to making sure your fire is even stronger than your ice.”

Shouto grit his teeth. Leave it to his father to start off his hell week by implying that he was better than Mom. Shouto took a deep breath. Mom had given him permission to use his fire again. He was doing this to make her proud, he just had to remember that.

“Let’s begin by seeing how long you can keep your flames up before you pass out from the heat.” Endeavor continued. He got out his phone and showed Shouto the screen. It was on the stopwatch function. “Begin!”

Katsuki walked toward the building, which looked like it had been repaired so many times that the workers had stopped trying to match the exact shade of paint, and rang the bell. There was a long moment without any response and Katsuki was considering knocking the door down when there was a yell from the inside.

“Come the fuck in!”

He rolled his eyes, but slammed the door open. Inside was one large room with a few couches, a TV, and a set of stairs leading to the upper levels. Miruko was lounging on one of the couches playing on her phone and didn’t even bother to look up when he came in. Katsuki stood in the doorway for a moment before stomping over to stand right in front of her.

“Yo! Bunny Bitch! You gonna train me, or what?”

Miruko grinned and tossed her phone down on the couch, “I guess that depends, Blasty. You gonna make me?”

Katsuki looked at her in shock. Hadn’t she been the one that requested him? Was she not gonna do her damn job?

“Tch,” Miruko picked her phone back up, “and here I thought you had some fight in ya. May as well go back to middle school if you’re gonna turn down a fight. Heroes have gotta be willing to throw down at any time.”

Katsuki scowled and took off his blazer. If Bunny Bitch wanted a fight, she was gonna get a damn fight! He screamed and threw an explosive punch at her phone, but she managed to react quickly enough so his

explosion hit only air.

“Now that’s what I’m talking about blasty!” She grinned and stood, cracking her neck. “Now let’s see how you handle this!”

She aimed a kick at his stomach, which Katsuki dodged using his explosions. As soon as he landed, he turned to counterattack, but was met with a kick to the back instead.

“Lesson number one: never take your eyes off an enemy, especially not one who’s better than you.” Miruko said. “And stop making your movements so obvious. You’re taking all the fun out of it!”

Katsuki grimaced as he peeled himself off the wall and saw the sizable dent his body had left. He was starting to see why this place had been repaired so many times, “I’m gonna make you pay for that, Bunny Bitch!”

Miruko laughed, “I’ll believe that when I see it, Blasty, right now, you’re getting your ass handed to you!”

Katuki grinned as he dodged another kick and immediately launched an explosion at Miruko’s face. This week was gonna be awesome!

Mirio hoped that he wasn’t in the wrong place. He swore that this was the address All Might gave him, but maybe he just wasn’t reading it right? Gran Torino was a hero, retired, yes, but still a hero, so he couldn’t live in such a rundown place, right?

Hesitantly, he knocked on the door, only for it to open on it’s own like the opening of a bad horror movie. Ok, he could go completely intangible, so he could probably avoid getting murdered if he went inside. Hopefully.

Mirio slowly opened the door and waited for his eyes to adjust to the darkness of the room. Ok, so the inside was a little better maintained than the outside had been and...oh no. He froze when he saw a short old man in a white cape lying face down in a puddle of what looked suspiciously like blood. Oh, no, Gran Torino was dead, All Might was going to be so sad and what would Sir think? Had he been close to Gran Torino as well?

Mirio took a deep breath and forced himself to move forward. He was going to be a hero, he could handle this. He thought back to his crisis management classes from second year. First off, he should check for

signs of life, then call the police. He crouched down to check for a pulse, only to scream and fall on his butt when the body suddenly raised its head and smiled.

“I’m alive!”

Mirio stared at him for a moment before bursting into laughter, “All Might never mentioned you were a prankster too!”

Gran Torino got up off the floor and helped him up, “Probably because Toshinori’s too embarrassed for falling for so many of them back in the day! Kid’s got a good heart, but he’s kinda an idiot sometimes. Now go get a mop and help me clean up this ketchup!”

Mirio grinned and went to find the kitchen. This guy’s prank game was so on-point that he managed to convince a third-year hero student that he was dead, but Mirio could only freak people out if they didn’t know his quirk yet. Gran Torino was a master of the craft and Mirio got to spend an entire week learning from him.

This was gonna be so much fun!

Izuku read through all the clues again, wondering if he’d missed something somewhere. The last clue had led him to an apartment building, which seemed correct, but he had no way of knowing which apartment was Nedzu’s. Was he supposed to knock on every door and ask where the principal lived? Considering that he was probably the only animal living there, his neighbors almost definitely knew which apartment was his. But that couldn’t be what Nedzu had in mind.

He looked through the clues again. Most of them were riddles, with the exception of the PO box key. Wait, a key! A key with a number on it! Which number was it again? Izuku dug in his pocket and looked at the handle. *209*. It might not mean anything, but he’d known Nedzu for long enough that he knew that he rarely did something for no reason. It would be just like Nedzu to hide a clue in a random object that would likely be dismissed as having already fulfilled its purpose.

Izuku climbed the stairs to the second floor and knocked on the door to apartment 209. There was a long moment and Izuku had already started drafting his apology to the actual resident of the apartment when the door finally opened.

“Ah, Midoriya, perfect timing!” Nedzu grinned and stepped aside to let him in. “Dinner is almost ready.”

Training

Chapter Summary

Our heroes begin training on their internships.

Izuku woke up early to the smell of breakfast. Nedzu was a surprisingly good cook, which Izuku hadn't expected considering that the only thing he'd seen him make before was tea. But then again, he supposed that no one cooked a lot in their work office, so that made sense. He got dressed quickly and went to the kitchen to see Nedzu already setting the table.

He smiled when he saw Izuku come in, "Good Morning, Midoriya! I hope you slept adequately!"

Izuku nodded, "The bed was really soft."

Nedzu laughed, "Yes, well, I have never quite understood humans obsession with a firm mattress. I know that I live a more advanced life than most animals, but you must admit there are times when humans miss the mark entirely and your bedding is one of them. I believe Aizawa agrees, considering the way he cocoons himself."

"He'd better be careful," Izuku grinned, "one of these days, he's going to accidently emerge as a beautiful butterfly."

"More likely as a moth." Nedzu countered. "I very much doubt even his garish cocoon could impart any color to him."

Izuku laughed, "Or maybe that sleeping bag has been gradually leeching away any color he once had."

Nedzu nodded sagely, "Its sins are too many to count. But don't just sit there, eat!"

Izuku didn't have to be told twice and dug in, "So what's the plan for today?"

"Well, I suppose that depends." Nedzu said. "How are your computer skills?"

"I've been trying to learn a little bit since you mentioned maybe teaching me hacking." Izuku shrugged. "But I don't think I'm very good yet."

“Then that’s where we’ll begin!” Nedzu smiled encouragingly. “I’ll give you some tasks to test your current ability, you’re almost certainly further along than you believe, and then we’ll advance into basic hacking.”

Hitoshi felt like he was going to die.

Alright, so maybe that was a bit dramatic, but after how badly he’d embarrassed himself last night, he felt like he deserved to be depressed. He hadn’t even been able to get through all of Aizawa’s basic tests before he was too tired to continue.

Which led him to where he currently was, trying to somehow force himself to do enough pushups to impress Eraserhead. It wasn’t going well.

“Stop.”

Hitoshi didn’t need to be told twice. He collapsed to the ground and splayed out on his belly. Maybe if he stayed there long enough, he might be able to feel his arms again.

Aizawa looked at the notebook he was holding, then down at Hitoshi, “You’re pushing yourself too hard. You can’t expect to grow stronger overnight, Shinso, bodies don’t work that way.”

Hitoshi groaned and rolled over onto his back, “You were the one that said I had spaghetti arms.”

Aizawa gave a small smile, “Actually, I called you a stick figure, but I don’t disagree with your assessment.”

Hitoshi groaned again and Aizawa helped him to his feet, “But in all seriousness, if you try to overdo, you’ll only end up hurting yourself. Deku did the same thing when we first started physical training and he ended up learning moderation the hard way.”

Aizawa handed Hitoshi a water bottle that he gratefully accepted, “What happened?”

“The problem child ended up passing out and he’s lucky he didn’t pull a muscle.” Aizawa shook his head. “Don’t be like him.”

Hitoshi nodded. An injury would only set him back and he couldn’t afford to waste any more time if he wanted to prove he deserved his

place in the hero course, “So I need to hold back.”

“It’s not so much holding back so much as knowing your limits.” Aizawa said. “Knowing how much you can handle is an important skill for any hero, but for underground heroes like us it can mean the difference between life and death. You don’t have a physical quirk, which means that there are some villains who are going to be a bad match-up for you. Over time, you’ll develop the skills you need to beat them, but there are times in any hero’s career where they have to choose to stay back and gather info instead of fighting. You’re no use to anyone if you’re dead or injured.”

Hitoshi frowned, “I didn’t think not fighting was an option.”

Aizawa looked at him intensely, “Not fighting is always an option. It’s your responsibility as a hero to get strong enough that it’s not your *only* option. Take a break and get your breath back. We’ll start again in a few minutes.”

Hitoshi nodded and sat at one of the benches at the edge of the small gym. There was an area in the corner for weight training and a sparring mat that Hitoshi was becoming a little *too* familiar with, but most of the room actually looked like a mini parkour course. Aizawa could navigate every single obstacle without breaking a sweat, but even the smallest ones still stopped Hitoshi in his tracks. He had a long way to go.

“Shouta? Are you here?”

Hitoshi startled as a woman’s voice called from the hall and he looked at Aizawa for guidance on how to handle the intruder. Eraserhead’s agency was independent, so there wasn’t supposed to be anyone else in this building, right?

To his surprise, however, Aizawa just sighed and yelled back, “I’m in the gym, Emi!” He turned to glare at Hitoshi, his activated quirk making him even more intimidating than normal. “If you tell anyone about her, I *will* expel you, understood?”

Hitoshi nodded quickly and Aizawa’s hair fell around his shoulders right as the door slammed open and a slim woman with sea green hair strode into the room. She hadn’t taken long to find them, so she must already be comfortable with the layout of the agency, which meant that she’d been there before, probably multiple times.

Hitoshi’s eyes widened as the strange woman walked straight up to

Aizawa, the same Aizawa who had the highest expulsion rate at UA and took down any villain he came across with brutal procision, *that* Aizawa, and gave him a kiss on the cheek. The woman must be insane. Hitoshi didn't know what exactly he'd been expecting, but it wasn't Aizawa sending her a glare without any power behind it and her responding by sticking out her tongue.

The woman looked around and saw Hitoshi, who froze when she grinned and turned back to Aizawa, "You got yourself another kid, Shouta? You just can't help yourself, can you?"

Aizawa sighed, "Emi, this is Shinso, he's interning with me this week. Shinso, this is Emi Fukukado, hero name: Ms. Joke." He dipped his head further into his capture weapon until he looked a bit like a turtle. "My girlfriend."

Oh.

Mirio sat on the floor catching his breath as Gran Torino did the same across from him. They'd started sparring just after breakfast, but between the old timer's Jet and Mirio's Permeation, neither of them had been able to land a single hit. It was like a massive game of tag where they were both it, but they were playing in a pinball machine. It was surprisingly fun.

Gran Torino rolled a water bottle to him, which Mirio accepted gratefully, "I gotta admit, kid, I wasn't expecting you to have mastered One for All already. Toshinori has a lot of strengths, but teaching isn't one of them. I'm pleasantly surprised he actually paid attention long enough to teach you how to use the quirk."

"Well, actually…" Mirio grimaced.

Gran Torino looked at him suspiciously, "What?"

"I mean, All Might's been great!" Mirio said quickly. "And I'm really lucky to be able to learn from him, but...One for All actually broke my bones when I first got it. It wasn't until Sir got me a sit down with Deku that I figured out how to actually use it without hurting myself."

"Deku?" Gran Torino asked. "The analyst?"

Mirio nodded, "He's only a first year at UA, but he had an internship with Sir before school started and he gave me some help after I demonstrated my quirk for him."

To his surprise, Gran Torino chuckled, “So Deku really *is* a kid, huh? Well, I’ll be. Did you know that when he first came on the scene, the prevailing opinion was that he was some retired pro lik yours truly?”

“Sir mentioned something about that.” Mirio smiled. “Have you ever worked with him?”

“Nah,” he said, “but I got so many emails about the kid that I felt like I practically knew him. Since everyone thought he was an old geezer like me, they figured we must have crossed paths at some point.”

“What did you do?” Mirio asked.

“What do you think I did?” Gran Torino laughed. “I told them, *of course* I knew him! I started making up stories about all these shenanigans Deku and I had gotten up to back in the good old days, but added just enough nonsense that no one could tell if I was being serious or not. When someone else would email me, I’d tell the same stories, but change one or two major things so that when people talked, no one would be able to agree what actually happened, or if it happened at all. That was a fun time.”

“That’s awesome!” Miro laughed. “I bet you’ve gotten a lot of angry emails since people realized you were messing with them.”

“That’s the best part!” Gran Torino said. “Everyone just assumes I’m a senile old man, so no one can get mad at me, because I must have just misremembered. You can’t use that trick yet, but trust me when I say it’s the best part about getting old.”

Katsuki tried not to explode as he ended up on his back again. So far, his internship with Miruko had consisted of a lot of sparring, which was a lot of fun, don’t get him wrong, it’s just that he was starting to get tired of losing. Every time he ended up on the ground, he had to fight against that gut feeling that he was worthless because he hadn’t won, and he was sick of it. The Mutt’s voice rang in his ears, reminding him that Miruko was a top ten pro and he was a first year student, so obviously she was going to be stronger than him. Reminding himself of that didn’t make the feeling go away, though.

“Let’s take a break.” Miruko said, helping him up.

“I can keep going.” Katsuki growled before he could help himself. He needed to prove himself...wait, no he didn’t...ugh, this sucked.

Miruko chucked, “Nah, your head’s someplace else, that’s no fun. You hungry?”

Katsuki shrugged, “I could eat.”

“That’s what I want to hear!” Katsuki followed her into the kitchen and she opened the fridge. “Here, have a carrot.”

“I’m not a fucking rabbit!”

“Well I am, so deal with it!” She tossed him a carrot, which Katsuki snatched out of the air.

They ate in silence for a few minutes before Katsuki broke the silence, “How’d you get so strong?”

Miruko thought for a minute, “A lot of practice, mostly. My quirk doesn’t hurt either, though growing up, I thought it made me weak.” Her voice took on a high pitched, mocking tone. *“Oh, it’s the cute little bunny! Be careful not to spook her or she’ll run away!”*

“You got bullied?” Katsuki tried to bury his guilt as he remembered what he did to Deku.

Miruko shrugged, “Kids can be mean, what are you gonna do? Joke’s on them, though, cause what they didn’t know was that a cornered rabbit will do what it takes to survive. I’m not a coward, never was, but I also had to learn what strength *really* was.”

Katsuki froze, “What do you mean? Strength is strength, isn’t it?”

Miruko rolled her eyes, “Any meathead can learn to punch hard. You see all these thugs with strong quirks that think they’re all that, but when push comes to shove, they’re no better than someone quirkless, because most of the time, it’s about strength of will. Physical strength is gonna do squat when you’ve been fighting for hours and feel like you’re about to pass out. It’s not gonna help when lives are on the line and you’re against a villain that’s a bad quirk matchup for you. Sometimes, strength is about fighting to save that one last person, especially when you feel like you can’t.”

“But what about being the strongest?” Katsuki asked. “You’re high up in the rankings, so aren’t you trying to be the best?”

“The best?” Miruko scowled. “Fuck that! It doesn’t matter if you’re the strong *est,* Blasty, it matters that you’re strong enough to fight when it

matters. The best?" She scoffed. "If you're focused on being better than other heroes, that's kinda a dick move to the people you're supposed to be saving. A hero needs to be strong above all else, but it isn't a competition, it's a matter of life and death for both you and the people you need to save."

Katsuki stared at her as he processed what she'd said. Strength wasn't about being the best, it never had been. He'd had it all wrong for all these years. Strength was about always being willing to fight for what mattered and being able to keep fighting when it felt like he had no chance of winning. It was about being the strongest that *he* could possibly be, not about being stronger than Deku or Todoroki. If he was strong enough to fight when lives were on the line, then that was what mattered and the only person he needed to compete with was himself.

Katuski stood and threw away the green part of his carrot, "Alright then, Bunny Bitch, I guess we better get back to work so I can *really* be strong when it matters."

Miruki grinned, "That's more like it! Now pretend I've got a hostage."

Learning

Chapter Summary

Internships continue

Izuku rubbed his eyes and wished he'd stolen some of Eraser's eye drops. He'd known that staring at a screen for so long could be exhausting, but before, he'd just been analyzing videos heroes sent, which felt as natural as breathing, so he hardly even noticed the strain. It wasn't that hacking was *difficult* , per say, it was just that it was a brand new skill that he wasn't used to. He had to learn the grammar of the different codes and make sure that he didn't have any typos. Each line of code had to follow the last in a way that made sense to make sure the program did what he wanted it to in the correct order, whereas analyzing moved and made connections more freely. He was basically having to retrain his brain to think in a different way.

It was still fun though, even when Nedzu laughed that time when he'd missed a semicolon and ended up yelling at the screen. It was a *semicolon,* it shouldn't have made that big of a difference! But no! It messed up the entire code and it had taken Izuku an entire hour to figure out what he was doing wrong. He hated computers.

Okay, not really, but he was definitely glad that it was time to switch gears and do some work on *paper* instead of on a screen. Hacking would probably be a lot easier once he'd had a chance to take a break and come back to it with a fresh mind. Nedzu finished brewing the tea and brought it to the kitchen table as Izuku sat down. There were already a few files laid out between them and Izuku opened one of them curiously. To his surprise, it seemed to be a practice test of some sort.

"I thought I'd already completed all of your intelligence tests?" Izuku asked.

Nedzu chuckled, "This is not a test that I designed, Midoirya, Tsukauchi gave this to me a few days ago. I believe I told you that a private investigator's license would serve you well, did I not?"

"Oh…" Izuku looked at the test again and, sure enough, most of the questions were about legal restrictions and detective work. "There's just been so much else going on…"

Nedzu nodded, “Yes, especially since you have decided to bring the number two hero to justice. However, that is exactly why you need a license. Much of the work that you have been doing will apply toward the practical hours you need for it, and once you receive your license, the evidence you have gathered will be more easily admissible in court. Not to mention that the hacking skills you’re learning this week will help you in this and in future investigations.”

Izuku nodded, “That makes sense. So...do I just take this test or…?”

“This is, of course, only a practice exam.” Nedzu said. “But they are holding an exam shortly before the next semester begins and I would like you to be prepared to take it.”

“So what do I need to know?”

Nedzu grinned and Izuku felt a chill run down his spine, “Why don’t you take the practice exam and let’s find out!”

Momo wasn’t sure she’d made the correct choice for her internship. Uwabami was a popular hero, and a strong woman, so Momo had assumed she’d learn a lot about being a woman in a field where men were much more common and women were often objectified. She’d been hoping to learn how to avoid that objectification, and instead she was left to wonder if her only option was to embrace it. There must be some other lesson that Uwabami had in mind, but for the life of her, Momo couldn’t find it.

Kendo had apparently decided that Uwabami was a joke, but Momo wasn’t quite willing to admit that yet. Their mentor couldn’t be wasting their time, could she? Momo had always known that fame and public opinion was essential to being a hero, her mom was a master of that, after all, but Uwabami seemed to take that to the extreme. The only *hero-like* thing they’d done since they arrived was go on patrol, but even then Uwabami seemed to spend more time signing autographs than actually looking for villains and keeping people safe.

Momo was still grateful, though. She honestly hadn’t been expecting any offers at all, not after her epic failure against Tokoyami at the sports festival. She’d had such high expectations for herself and wanted so badly to make her parents proud, but instead she’d frozen when she should have fought. She just knew Mom was disappointed in her, even though she’d said she wasn’t, but even more than that, Momo was disappointed in herself. How could she be a hero if she

couldn't even fight when it really mattered.

So, she let Uwabami drag her and Kendo into a commercial, which was…interesting? It had taken much longer than Momo had thought it would, and afterward Uwabami stayed behind to sign autographs for the camera crew, *networking* was what she'd called it, and Momo had gone with Kendo back to the dressing room.

"What do you think of all this, Yaoyorozu?" Kendo asked. She was sitting on the counter and swinging her legs out as they waited for Uwabami to finally join them.

"We're lucky to have gotten the offer."

Kendo rolled her eyes, "I mean, yeah, but it's still ridiculous. Isn't she supposed to be teaching us something?"

"Maybe we're just missing it?" Yaoyorozu replied. Leave it to her to be dumb enough to miss whatever their mentor was trying to teach them.

"You just keep telling yourself that." Kendo said. "I don't know. Maybe what we need to take away from this is that the hero industry isn't as perfect as we grew up thinking. I mean, wouldn't Uwabami have made a better model than a hero?"

"Popularity is an important part of the industry." Momo said weakly. The argument sounded weaker every time she repeated it.

"You have homeroom with Eraserhead." Kendo pointed out. "So while popularity is important, it's obviously not essential. I personally want to fight and save people more than I want to have my own line of hair care products. Do you want to be a sexy hero?"

Yaoyorozu thought about it for a moment. Her mom was a sexy hero, but she still fought, unlike Uwabami. But was that what Momo wanted? She remembered the way that Mineta had leered at her every time she entered the room and her stomach turned, "No, not really. I…don't want people looking at me like that."

Kendo shivered in solidarity, "I know what you mean. Have you ever considered redesigning your hero costume? We could probably come up with a few ideas while we wait for Miss *you can have a rabid fanbase too* to come back."

Momo rubbed her arm awkwardly, "Well, my costume needs to show a lot of skin…"

Kendo nodded, “I get that. I can’t have long sleeves on my costume for the same reason. They'd rip as soon as I activated my quirk. But now that you’ve been fighting for a while, you’ve learned where you usually create items while fighting, right?”

Momo thought for a moment, “I usually use my stomach or back for larger items, and my hands or wrists for smaller items, simply because they’re more accessible if I make them there. I honestly don’t use my thighs nearly as much as I thought I would, though. I just don’t think about them.”

Kendo looked around, then grabbed a napkin and an eyebrow pencil, “Alright, so let’s design based around how you actually use your quirk. You’re pretty smart, Yaoyorozu, I couldn’t remember all those chemical formulas if I tried, so I’m sure we’ll be able to come up with something that will match the type of hero you want to be.”

Momo nodded and started sketching out some ideas. Kendo was most likely just humoring her, but well, redesigning her costume was something productive to do while Uwabami was busy signing autographs. Maybe Kendo was right and Uwabami didn’t really care about anything besides popularity, or maybe Momo was still just missing the lesson, but in the end, she supposed it didn’t matter as much as she’d thought it did.

If they couldn’t learn anything from their mentor, they’d just have to learn from each other.

To Hitoshi’s surprise, Ms. Joke didn’t leave after she’d realized Aizawa had an intern. Instead, she’d hung around and sat on the bench laughing at him as he tried to survive Aizawa’s nightmare training. He didn’t know what he’d expected from whoever Aizawa was dating, considering that he was still trying to wrap his head around the idea of his favorite hero dating anyone, but if someone had told him that Eraserhead was dating an extravert, he wouldn’t have believed them.

Hitoshi didn’t necessarily *mind* her hanging around, it was just weird. It was also a little strange because Aizawa fought differently when she was around, almost like he was subconsciously trying to show off. If Hitoshi didn’t live in mortal terror of Aizawa expelling him right after he’d gotten in the hero course, he would be tempted to file that fact away for blackmail. It was a shame, but Hitoshi didn’t have a death wish.

At some point, Aizawa had gone to take a nap and Hitoshi had taken

the opportunity to collapse on the floor. He'd only been on his internship two days and he was already exhausted, but it would all be worth it the minute he held his real life hero's license in his hands. He just had to keep reminding himself of that.

"Are you ok?"

Hitoshi opened his eyes slightly to see Ms. Joke standing above him, chuckling.

"Yeah," Hitoshi weakly pumped his fist into the air as he let his eyes close again, "living the dream."

Ms. Joke snorted, "Oh my goodness, if Shouta wasn't still alive, I'd think you were his literal reincarnation."

Hitoshi shook his head, "No offense to your boyfriend or anything, but Aizawa is *way* scarier than I am."

He didn't need to open his eyes to know she was rolling her eyes, "He's already given you his expulsion speech, hasn't he?"

"If you mean he has made it crystal clear that he can kick me out of the hero course at any moment, then yes," Hitoshi said, "he has given me the expulsion speech."

"Yeah, that's Shouta for you." Hitoshi glanced over as Ms. Joke laid down on the mat next to him. "But don't let him fool you, he's a giant softy."

Histoshi raised an eyebrow, "I think your definition of *softy* might be a little skewed."

"Nope." She said with a pop. "He took us to a cat cafe for our first date."

That made Hitoshi sit up, "What?"

She nodded, "Like I said, a softy."

Hitoshi laid back down and shook his head in disbelief, "I can't see it."

Ms. Joke shrugged, "He puts up a tough exterior, but don't let that fool you. The secret about Shouta is that he cares a little *too* much, and we both hate it when our students end up hurt because they didn't realize how dangerous it is to be a hero. But as long as you take things seriously, he'll do whatever it takes to make sure you succeed.

Now up! Time to get back to work!"

"Fine," Hitoshi groaned and stretched, "whatever you say, Aizawa's girlfriend."

Ms. Joke laughed and helped him to his feet, "You can just call me Joke, kid." She thought for a moment, then a wicked grin spread across her face. "Unless of course, you want to see Shouta blush, in which case, just keep doing what you're doing."

Hitoshi found himself with a matching grin. Well, if he had permission…

Todoroki used his right side to bring down his body temperature again as he laid down after another exhausting day of training. His control over his flames had gone up dramatically the past few days, but he was going to have to practice using each of his quirks to just regulate his temperature when he got back to UA, because Endeavor obviously wasn't focused on the balance between his two quirks. Maybe Midoriya would have some ideas?

Todoroki jumped to his feet as the door to his room slammed open and his father walked in, the light from his mustache illuminating the dark room, "Shouto, be ready to leave early tomorrow."

"Why?" Shouto tried to keep the suspicion out of his voice as much as possible. He didn't need to be dragged back into the training room again if he had to wake up early.

"We're going to Hosu." Endeavor turned and strode back out of the room. "It's time I show you what a *real* hero does."

Hosu

Chapter Summary

A handful of heroes end up in Hosu

“Thank you for allowing us to use your resources, Chief Tsuragamae.” Nedzu said politely as they were led back into a room filled with more monitors than Izuku had ever seen outside of TV stores. Nedzu had said that the police normally had access to most cameras in a city and Nedzu could help him hack into any others they needed, so this would be a good middle step for Izuku, since three days obviously wasn’t enough time to become a master hacker. What Nedzu hadn’t been clear about, though, was why they were in Hosu rather than Musutafu. Izuku had figured he might as well check on Iida as long as he was here, but so far he hadn’t responded to any of his texts.

The police chief made sure they were settled before letting himself out, “It’s our pleasure. You passed our bullpen on the way in, so just let any of the officers know if you need any help.”

Nedzu nodded and the chief left them alone. Izuku’s curiosity was going crazy because he couldn’t decide whether he was more interested in all the technology or in the reason they’d come to Hosu in the first place. The latter eventually won out.

“What are we doing here?” Izuku asked. “Wouldn’t it have been easier to practice in Tsukauchi’s department?”

“Ah, Midoriya,” Nedzu smiled, “surely you’ve noticed by now that none of our practice exercises are simply practice! If I’m going to teach you a useful skill such as tracking and espionage, I’m going to give you a real life villain to track.”

Izuku’s eyes widened, “Oh…”

“So, since we need more information for our case against Endeavor,” Nedzu continued, “let’s see if you can find him on the cameras.”

Izuku dutifully sat down and started flicking through the camera feeds, focusing on places heroes would frequent, “What makes you think Endeavor is in Hosu today?”

“Hmm,” Nedzu hummed thoughtfully, “what do you think? What

would bring the number two hero to Hosu?"

Izuku continued looking at the cameras as he ran through what he knew of Endeavor, "Well, Hosu isn't that populated, so it doesn't make sense for him to come here if he's hoping to improve public opinion. It also doesn't have a high crime rate, so he isn't hoping to increase his numbers. The only thing interesting that happened here recently is… Oh! He's hoping to catch the hero killer."

"Exactly," Nedzu said. "So how does that change how we search for him?"

"Well, I suppose it depends on if we believe that he knows what he's looking for." Izuku said. "I would look for the hero killer in secluded alleys, so if Endeavor is smart, that's where he'll be, but he also tends not to listen to analysts, so there's also a chance he's simply planning on his innate skill as a hero to find him."

"Both are possibilities." Nedzu acknowledged. "But even if he doesn't listen to analysts, he would not have gotten as far as he has if he wasn't intelligent."

Izuku nodded and kept looking, but stopped when he saw Iida trailing behind Manual on a patrol. They stopped and seemed to be talking about something for a minute as Manual smiled apologetically, but when they started walking again, Iida's movements were stiffer for some reason, like he was angry about something. But maybe that was just Iida. It was difficult to tell the difference between a normal stiffness and a bad stiffness when it came to him.

"Ah, you're looking at Iida, yes?" Nedzu asked.

Izuku nodded, "I don't understand why he chose Hosu of all places."

"He told Aizawa and I that he was hoping to follow in his brother's footsteps." Nedzu replied. "We were naturally concerned, but he insisted that he wanted to familiarize himself with his brother's old patrols, since they might become his in a few years." Nedzu sighed. "The staff is also hoping that seeing where the attack happened might help him come to terms with everything."

Izuku frowned and went back to searching for Endeavor, "That makes sense, and he says he's ok, so I haven't pushed the issue, but I'm still concerned."

"That is because you're his friend." Nedzu responded. "Not everyone is

so lucky to have people that care about them."

Izuku flipped through the cameras for a few more minutes, focusing this time on places that the hero killer would be likely to go, "Found him."

"Perfect." Nedzu looked over his shoulder. "Now, practice switching cameras as he moves while simultaneously observing his behavior, especially how he interacts with Todoroki. Remote surveillance has many advantages, but there are limitations as well. Today, you'll undoubtedly run into both."

Hitoshi gripped the ends of the capture weapon and tried to hit the empty soda can that Aizawa had set on one of the boxes in the gym. When Aizawa had suggested he learn how to use it, he'd thought that it couldn't possibly be that difficult, right? It was basically a giant ribbon!

Aizawa had, of course, warned him that it took a lot of practice to master, but Hitoshi should have been more frightened. He'd been expecting the weapon to be soft and flexible, since that's the way it looked when Aizawa used it, but that was apparently an optical illusion. He supposed it made sense for the weapon to be stiff, considering that it was able to hold struggling villains, but it also made it difficult to work with.

It also was really sensitive, but not in any way that was easy to predict. Hitoshi would try a small movement and nothing would happen, so he'd try a larger movement, but then somehow the two would combine until the weapon was making large jumps that weren't anything like what Hitoshi had been going for. The weapon was also prone to coiling, which would be great if it was around a villain or even around the empty soda can that he was supposed to be knocking off a box.

It was less great when the capture weapon insisted on coiling around his arm.

"Don't worry, Shinso." Aizawa said. "You'll get the hang of it, eventually. I warned you it took a lot of practice."

"How did you even decide to use this weapon in the first place." Shinso muttered.

"Like most great support items," he said, "it was the brainchild of

some mad scientist in the support course. When he showed me how it was designed to move, I agreed to test it, and the rest was history. I liked it better than the more violent alternatives."

"Not that there's anything wrong with a little violence." Joke had shown up sometime after lunch and had spent the entire time laughing at his attempts to use the capture weapon, which Hitoshi thought was extremely unhelpful. "I use brass knuckles and Deku uses guns."

"Yes, but the public tends to be less forgiving of weapon-based injuries than they are of quirk-induced ones." Aizawa said. "But, whatever, it blended well with my fighting style and, once I'd mastered it, my capture weapon became versatile enough that I can use it for offense, defense, and restraint, so I don't plan on giving it up any time soon. Alright, let's try again. Think of the weapon as an extension of yourself, rather than something foregin that you need to tame."

Hitoshi nodded and aimed for the can, trying to almost snap the weapon like Midnight did with her weapon. For once, the weapon did exactly what he wanted...except for one little thing. Instead of hitting the can, it hit Hitoshi on the nose. He dropped the weapon to grab his face, but as it fell, one of the ends somehow coiled around his legs and Hitoshi ended up on the ground.

Aizawa snorted, "Yeah, that happens. You'll get used to it."

"Somehow, that is the exact opposite of comforting." Hitoshi grumbled.

Aizawa rolled his eyes, "Untangle yourself and keep practicing. I'm going to get a coffee."

Hitoshi groaned and got to work as Aizawa left. He just needed to be patient, he couldn't expect to be as good as Aizawa was with a weapon he'd never touched before this morning. He'd master the stupid thing eventually if he was stubborn enough.

Joke was still laughing at him, "You're like a little kitten!"

Hitoshi finally managed to uncoil the weapon from his legs and stand up, "How so?"

"You keep getting tangled up while playing with string!" She squealed.

Hitoshi glared at her and tried to wrap her up in the weapon. He didn't know what he'd been expecting to happen, maybe he'd figured that she'd make an easier target because she was so much bigger than a soda can. Whatever he'd been trying to do, it didn't change the fact that the weapon somehow went completely around his body and wrapped his arms in such a way that he lost his grip on it as he stumbled and went crashing through the floor.

"Thanks for proving my point!" Joke cackled.

"Maybe you should try it!" Hitoshi squirmed as he tried to untangle himself with little success. "You can start by getting me out of this mess."

"You know what? Maybe I should." Joke came up and gripped the ends. "It can't be nearly as difficult as you're making it out to be. You just pull here and then…"

To Hitoshi's surprise and disgruntlement, the weapon actually seemed to be doing what she wanted...at least until she moved it a little too fast and it jerked in her hand and wrapped around her arm.

She chuckled, "Ok, that was unexpected by I bet if I…"

Within minutes, she had somehow managed to get both herself and Hitoshi hopelessly tangled in the coils of the capture weapon. Whatever success she'd had at the beginning must have been beginner's luck, because whatever it was was long gone now. He would have been tempted to say *I told you so* if it wasn't for the fact that he was currently more worried about not getting strangled.

"Joke, stop pulling, it's too tight"

"Well how am I supposed to unwrap this without pulling, huh?"

"I can't breathe!"

"Ugh, how is this so difficult? Shouta makes this look easy."

Unfortunately, Aizawa chose that exact moment to come back with his coffee. Hitoshi and Joke froze and looked at him with wide eyes. He took one look at them, hopelessly tangled in a heap on the floor and his expression shifted into one that was 100% *done* before he turned on his heel and started walking back out of the room. Hitoshi looked at Joke in a panic, only to see her looking back at him with a similar expression.

“Wait! Shouta, don’t go!”

“Help! Aizawa, come back!”

He didn’t even bother turning around as he replied, “You two got yourselves into this mess, you can get yourselves out!”

Mirio stared out the window of the train as it sped toward Shibuya. Gran didn’t want him to get any weird habits from fighting just one opponent for too long, so they were going to a more populated area so he could check what he was learning against actual villains. So far, they’d just been refining his control over One for All and trying to blend it seamlessly with Permeation. Gran had been a big help in getting Mirio see it as *his* quirk, not just All Might’s, which was honestly still a little difficult. Yes, One for All was starting to feel more natural, but using Permeation felt like breathing. It had been a part of him his entire life, even if his control had been lacking before he met Sir.

One for All still felt like a hand-me-down sweater.

But maybe that was because the quirk came with such high expectations. All Might wanted him to be the next him, the next symbol of peace. He didn’t regret accepting the quirk, and he didn’t think he ever would, but there were times when the pressure got to him. What if he wasn’t good enough? What if people didn’t like him? What if, even after he saved a million people, he still wasn’t half the symbol of peace that All Might was? What if…

He was knocked out of his thoughts by Gran Torino hitting him over the head, “Stop that. I can practically see you overthinking from here. What’s on your mind?”

Mirio sighed, “It’s just a lot to live up to…”

He could tell from Gran’s face that he understood what Mirio was talking about, but to his surprise he asked, “What?”

“You know,” he frowned in confusion, “being the next All Might?”

Gran Torino tilted his head, “Who’s All Might?”

Okay, at this point Mirio was like 90% sure that Gran Torino was messing with him, so he laughed, “You’re one crazy old man.”

Gran Torino grinned, “But I’m a crazy old man with a point. If nobody knew who All Might was, would your goals change?”

Mirio thought about that. Would he still try to be the symbol of peace? His goal of saving a million people came from before he received One for All, so that wouldn’t change, but…would he still want to be a symbol?

“I would still want to save people.” Mirio said finally. “That hasn’t changed at all, but I don’t think I would have thought to be a symbol of peace. If it wasn’t for All Might, I think my goal would be to just bring people hope.”

“Then do that.” Gran said simply. “Look, Toshinori is a great man and a wonderful symbol of peace, but you’re not him. You are your own person with your own quirk and you will be a powerful symbol in your own right, so stop worrying so much about living up to his legacy and start worrying about the things that actually matter.”

“Like saving people?” Mirio asked.

“Like saving people.” Gran agreed.

Suddenly the brakes squealed and the train came to a stop.

“We apologize for the delay,” a voice spoke over the intercom, “but we have come to an emergency stop. We will be on our way as soon as the incident is resolved.”

Mirio frowned and looked at Gran Torino, who looked equally apprehensive. They stood, even though Mirio wasn’t quite sure if there was anything they could do. They were heading to the front of the train when there was a loud crash and a pro-hero came crashing through the side of the train, followed by the most frightening monster Mirio had ever seen.

Gran lowered himself into a battle stance as he faced down the villain, “What were we just saying about saving people?”

Izuku switched cameras as Endeavor and Toroki rounded another corner. Watching Todoroki and Endeavor all day had been difficult. Not in terms of skill, compared to some of the hacking exercises Nedzu had given him yesterday, using the city’s security access was relatively easy, but…well, watching them interact, it was simultaneously easy to see the red flags and easy to see why everyone

had missed them for over a decade.

Endeavor was very good at hiding his true nature. Because of his reputation for being harsh, no one ever got close enough to see the fear in Todoroki's eyes. To them, Endeavor was stern with high expectations for his son, but those were considered admirable traits in parents. Todorki had a lot of potential, so obviously his father needed to help him reach it. What the people on the street never realized was that the violent persona Endeavor projected to the public wasn't just a persona, and Todoroki himself had long since learned that any emotion had to be hidden under an icy exterior, so he couldn't even ask for help.

Izuku just hoped that their plan to take down Endeavor worked. There were times that it seemed too intimidating, like he had just been put in front of a smooth stone wall and been told to climb it. Endeavor was the number two hero and a master of deception and manipulation, so taking him down was bound to be downright impossible. Izuku took a deep breath to steady himself as he kept watching. He was a quirkless kid in UA's hero course, he was used to doing the impossible.

Suddenly, he noticed Endeavor tense and look at something further down the street. Izuku glanced at Nedzu for permission before switching cameras to see what he was looking at. Izuku gasped and he was vaguely aware that Nedzu had gone stiff beside him.

"T-that's a Nomu…" Izuku stuttered. "What….?"

"Let's get an overview of the situation." Nedzu said calmly. "Let's start by…"

He trailed off as the nomu flung a piece of rubble into the building that had the camera, causing it to crumble and the camera feed turned to static.

"They need all hands on deck." Nedzu said. "Come, Midoriya, let's go out and help them."

Stain

Chapter Summary

Tracking down the hero killer.

Tenya Iida ran alongside Manual as they made their way toward the explosions in the distance. This was far too flashy to be the hero killer, but if he was still in Hosu, then he had to be taking advantage of the chaos. Tenya couldn't help looking down the alleys they passed, hoping for any glimpse of that murderer. He knew it was unlikely that he would find anything, which was why he was shocked enough to stop running when he saw a shadow with a red scarf stalking down a dark side street.

He looked after Manual, who hadn't realized that he wasn't following anymore, then back at the shadow, which turned and disappeared around a corner. He only hesitated a moment before running into the darkness. He understood what Manual had said about not seeking revenge, but he didn't have a choice. If that killer was allowed to keep killing, then his brother's injury would be in vain. He couldn't let that demon tarish his brother's memory like that!

He didn't bother being silent as he ran. Let the hero killer hear him! Let him turn around and face him so he could avenge his brother! The explosions and screams from the rest of the city must have been more than loud enough to cover his movements, or maybe that murderer didn't care, because he didn't turn around. How dare he!

The hero killer turned suddenly, making Tenya lose sight of him, but he couldn't give up his search! Not when he was so close! This area of town was deserted, so either the people who lived here were asleep or they had already evacuated. It was just as well. He didn't want any civilians getting in the way of this fight. He looked down every possible street, refusing to stop until he caught sight of the shadow again a few minutes later. This time, the murderer stood still, facing the wall of the alleyway with his katana in hand.

Tenya didn't hesitate. The hero killer turned as he heard the sound of the engines, but he was the next *Ingenium* , he was faster than some bloodstained monster. He raised his leg to kick the hero killer in the head, but the man managed to raise his sword just in time to block the kick and knock Tenya's helmet off in one swift movement.

“Run,” Stain said, “this is no place for children.”

Tenya’s heart clenched with hatred and he scowled as he stood. He would avenge his brother if it was the last thing he ever did.

Izuku ran alongside Nedzu, grateful that he’d worn his hero costume today. How had nomus ended up in Hosu? From what Shigaraki said at the USJ, Izuku had gotten the idea that the monster was one of a kind, but he supposed that with someone like All for One working behind the scenes, he really shouldn’t have been surprised. But why Hosu of all places? There were much better places if the league wanted to inspire fear.

He honestly wasn’t sure what he and Nedzu could do to help. His bullets weren’t going to do much good against a multiple quirked monster that could regenerate itself. But they had to try. Maybe they could help with evacuation?

They had finally reached the place where most of the action was. The heroes were out of their depth, struggling to get the upper hand as two separate nomus attacked everything in sight. Fires were raging and off to one side, they saw Manual using his quirk to put them out.

“Has anyone seen Tenya?” Manual yelled. “He ran off!”

Izuku and Nedzu both froze and looked at each other, “Iida.”

Izuku swore and ran for the nearest fire escape. With all the chaos on the ground, it would be faster to traverse the city on the rooftops. Vaguely, he was aware of Nedzu scrambling up behind him. They needed to find Iida, hopefully before he did something stupid.

Mirio followed Gran Torino as he tackled the monster out of the train. Was this...All Might had said something about a monster with multiple quirks attacking at the USJ, but this couldn’t be the same guy, right? That nomu was in jail. But this one also had an exposed brain and seemed to be attacking with little to no thought, so it had to be the same type of creature.

Gran Torino immediately started bouncing off the surrounding buildings to land hits on the nomu, so Mirio fired up One for All and started timing his attacks so that whenever Gran retreated, he was ready to land a hit. A normal opponent would be getting frustrated, but the nomu simply kept attacking at the same pace.

He heard a scream behind them and turned to see a pair of civilians backing away, tripping on a set of steps as they tried to get away. He smiled as brightly as he could. He had people to save.

“Gran, get them to safety!” Mirio yelled. “I’ll handle this guy.”

Gran nodded and flew over to grab the civilians as Mirio turned his full attention to the nomu and started punching, turning himself intangible every time the monster tried to land a hit. His two quirks flowed together seamlessly, something he’d been struggling with ever since receiving One for All, but he didn’t have time to congratulate himself before he felt a searing heat and turned himself completely intangible on instinct, sinking completely into the floor.

He popped up a few seconds later and ten feet away to see Endeavor roasting the nomu he had just been fighting. He hadn’t given him any warning before launching his attack, and if Mirio hadn’t managed to turn intangible right when he did…

“What’s the big idea!” Gran ran up to Endeavor. To someone who didn’t know him, Gran might seem too short to be properly intimidating, but Mirio wouldn’t want to be in Endeavor’s shoes at that moment. “You almost killed my intern!”

Endeavor sneered at him, “I can handle this guy better than some child. Your intern managed to dodge, so what’s the problem?”

“What’s the problem?!” Gran was screaming at this point. “The problem is that you launched a dangerous attack that could have very well hurt another hero! Did you even know that Le Million’s quirk would let him dodge that?”

Mirio felt the temperature drop beside him and he turned to see a kid around Deku’s age holding a chunk of ice out to him, “Did he burn you?”

Mirio shook his head, “I’m fine. You?”

The kid nodded, “Father wouldn’t ever do anything to seriously jeopardize my safety.” He frowned and looked at the nomu, who was starting to move again. “But this fight isn’t over yet.”

Izuku had been concerned at first that Nedzu wouldn’t be able to keep up with him because his legs were so much shorter than a human’s, but somehow Izuku had forgotten how fast animals could run if they

set their minds to it. As soon as they'd gotten to the rooftops, Nedzu had shifted to run on all fours, which again, Izuku should have expected, but it was easy to forget that he wasn't human. Nedzu scurried along and set the pace, with Izuku guiding them as he mentally ran through what he knew about the hero killer. He worked best in darkness...sneak attacks...so he probably would try to avoid the chaos from the nomu attacks, which meant that they should head in the opposite direction. He mostly attacked in alleyways, and he had to be close to where Manual was patrolling, otherwise Iida would never have caught sight of him.

"When we find them, what happens next?" Izuku asked.

"We fight." Nedzu said simply. "Your priority will be to get Iida to safety, but if Stain attacks you, you have my permission to defend yourself and Iida. You shouldn't get in trouble for illegal quirk usage either way, but just to be safe."

Izuku nodded, "Alright, just...be careful. Stain is deadly."

"So were the people who made me." Nedzu said seriously.

Izuku swallowed and continued running. He had to trust that Nedzu knew what he was doing, but what if they were too late? What if by the time they found Iida, he was already...

Suddenly, Nedzu's ears twitched and he took a sharp left. Izuku followed, straining his ears to hear what Nedzu's more sensitive hearing had picked up, but all he could hear was the chaos from the Nomu attack. They ran over two more rooftops before Nedzu skidded to a stop and Izuku had to concentrate to avoid tumbling over the edge of the rooftop. He glanced at Nedzu, then peered over the roof. The white of Iida's hero costume stood out starkly in the half-light of the alleyway, as did the harsh glint of the sword hovering over his neck.

They were close enough now that Izuku didn't even need superhuman hearing to catch Stain's next words, "Very well, Ingenium. May your death bring about a better world."

Hero Killer

Chapter Summary

Midoriya and Nedzu join the fight against the hero killer.

Izuku didn't know what possessed him to move. Nedzu had told him that he was only supposed to get Iida to safety and leave Stain to him, but then Izuku saw the knife and knew he had to do something. Time seemed to slow down as he drew his gun and shot the blade right as it began to fall. The gunshot echoed too loudly as the force of the bullet knocked the sword off course and sparks flew as the metal hit the concrete. Izuku swallowed as Stain slowly turned to stare straight at him.

Izuku's brain was working overtime. He didn't know how injured Iida was, or exactly what Stain's quirk was, or even if the other pro he saw slumped against the wall was still alive.. Nedzu was a few paces behind him, and was short enough that Stain probably hadn't spotted him yet, but he had most definitely seen Izuku. Neither of them had physical quirks that could overpower the hero killer and Izuku didn't have enough experience to fight him on his own. Right now, the best option would be for Izuku to distract Stain long enough for Nedzu to come up with a plan and contact whatever backup he could.

Eraser was going to kill him.

Izuku discretely took off his utility belt and dropped it to the floor along with his grappling hook, hoping that Nedzu would be able to use them in whatever scheme he was already coming up with, then jumped off the roof, using the fire escapes and gutters to parkour his way down to the alleyway. Stain simply watched his descent, eyes narrowed as he took in his new opponent.

"Another child?" Stain scoffed. "Leave now and I'll let you live. I have business to attend to."

"Let me take Ingenium and you'll never see me again." Izuku said. Prioritize the rescue. Nedzu would be able to follow Stain as long as he and Iida were safe. "Let's go Iida."

"I..Midoriya?" Iida's voice sounded broken and Izuku really hoped he'd be ok after all this. "I can't move my body. Ever since he cut me I've been paralyzed."

Izuku frowned. That matched the theories he'd read on Stain's quirk. So cutting must activate his power somehow. That meant he'd have to avoid getting cut.

Stain scowled, "This fake isn't worth your attention. He came here to kill me, thinking only of vengeance, not heroics. He must die, but your fate is still undecided."

"Midoriya, don't get involved." Iida pleaded. "Please, this is my fight!"

"No offense, Iida," Izuku said dryly, "but you're not in any condition to take on the hero killer right now."

"Enough!" Stain growled. "When your friend decided to fight me, it guaranteed the weaker of us would be culled! If you insist on protecting a worthless bug like him, I will have no choice but to kill you as well."

Izuku steadied his gun and aimed, "No one is worthless."

Mirio wanted to help fight the nomu, but it was just too dangerous to get too close to Endeavor while he fought, so he and Gran Torino were currently working to evacuate the surrounding buildings and making sure none of the civilians got hit by Endeavor's powerful fire blasts. Endeavor's son, who had introduced himself as Shouto, was trying to help them, so Gran had given him emergency permission to use his quirk to protect others so he could shield civilians with his ice and prevent his father's fire from weakening the already unstable buildings.

The good news was that Endeavor was actually making headway against the nomu. He seemed to be gradually overwhelming it, but it kept healing itself. Mirio remembered All Might saying they could do that, but unfortunately the police hadn't shared a lot of information about the nomu with the heroes, considering that they thought the one at the USJ had been the only one. All anyone knew about these monsters was that only All Might had been able to beat the last one, but unless he was miraculously in Hosu for whatever reason, they couldn't count on him to save them.

"Attention all heroes." A voice cut through the static on their standard issue, hero commission communication device. "The hero killer has been spotted at 4-2-10 Ekou Street. If your quirk is ill-suited to fighting the monsters, please assist."

A terrifying grin lit up Endeavor's face and he immediately turned away from the nomu, "Come Shouto."

Mirio's jaw dropped and he looked at Gran Torino, who was scowling. Endeavor's quirk *was* well suited to fighting the nomus, so why was he going to go fight the hero killer? Was he really going to abandon the undefeated Nomu when there were civilians in danger?

"We came to Hosu looking for Stain." Shouto explained, then sighed and jogged after his father, who was already disappearing down the street. "I'm sorry."

"That asshole!" Gran growled. "No wonder he's ever been able to beat Toshinori."

Mirio swallowed and looked back toward the nomu, who had already recovered from Endeavor's last attack and was lumbering toward the few civilians still evacuating. If All Might was the only person who had ever beaten one, then that meant that as the next holder of One for All, it was his responsibility to defeat these monsters! He let the lighting of his quirk surround him as he ran to stand between the nomu and the fleeing civilians.

"Smash!"

Izuku's aim was good, but Stain's reflexes had been honed by years of life and death combat, so the bullet barely grazed his arm as he lunged forward, sword in hand. Izuku jumped back, trying not to step on Iida as he holstered his gun and grabbed Stain's arm and tried to yank it behind his back. Stain, however, simply twisted, forcing Izuku to let go of his arm. They both took a step back, panting and waiting for the other to make the next move.

"Stop!" Iida tried. "Midoriya! Save yourself!"

"Shut up, Iida, I'm not leaving you!" Izuku snapped. "That's not what a hero does!"

Stain straightened and eyed Izuku curiously, "Interesting, you might have what it takes to be a real hero, not one of these useless fakes, if you'd commit yourself to protecting those who are actually innocent."

Izuku glanced at Iida and Native, then at Stain. If he could hold a conversation, that would be safer than fighting while he waited for Nedzu to make his move. He followed Stain's lead and relaxed his

stance, “What do you think a true hero is.”

The fire in Stain’s eyes was fanatic, “Someone who saves others without expecting anything in return. The broken system keeps churning out self-righteous celebrities who couldn’t care less about the people they defend. So far, the only true hero I’ve seen is All Might.”

Izuku bit his lip. The safe option would be to pretend he agreed with Stain, but then the conversation would be over, and if Nedzu wasn’t ready yet, then…the other option was to try to fight him on ideology. That could potentially make him angry, but it would drag out the conversation and take attention off Iida.

He was probably going to regret this.

“I don’t know if even All Might qualifies as a true hero.”

The passion in Stain’s eyes turned to rage, “What did you say?”

Izuku forced himself to sound nonchalant, “Have you seen all the merchandise All Might has? He’s probably one of the most famous heroes to ever exist! That doesn’t sound like your definition of a hero at all. If anything, you should be praising underground heroes. They don’t care about the media at all.”

“All Might didn’t ask for his fame.” Stain growled. “He uses it to give people hope.”

Izuku shrugged, “If that’s what you choose to believe.”

“Why you…”

Izuku made it look like he was rolling his eyes, but really he was glancing up to see if Nedzu was ready. He saw Nedzu peeking over the edge of the roof and held back a sigh of relief. Well, so far all he’d been able to do was antagonize a dangerous killer, so he may as well make him more angry. Maybe then he’d make a mistake.

“All I’m saying,” Izuku held out his hands in mock surrender, “is that All Might isn’t as great as you’re making him out to be. Heroes are supposed to give people hope, right? Well, when I first met All Might, he didn’t waste any time telling me that I couldn’t be a hero. Does that sound like something a true hero does?”

Stain scowled and shifted back into his battle stance, “All Might would be able to recognize a true hero, so if he said you couldn’t be one,

then you're just another fake and for that you must die."

Izuku swallowed and got ready to run, "You've been blinded by his fame. You think that you're killing to fix the system, but really you're just a deranged All Might fanboy."

Stain lunged forward, but before he could reach Izuku, Nedzu dropped a flash grenade down into the alley. Izuku screwed his eyes shut right before it hit and when he opened them again, the alley was filled with the effects of one of his smoke bombs. Stain was swinging blindly now, but Izuku simply ducked and ran to grab Native by the collar and drag him over to Iida. He felt the tip of a blade at his neck and froze. On the other end was Stain, his eyes bloodshot, but definitely filled with rage and focused on Izuku. He'd recovered from the flash grenade a lot faster than Izuku had been planning on.

Izuku swallowed and tried to brace himself for the blow, but before Stain could kill him, There was a zipping sound, then a clang as Izuku's grappling hook embedded itself in the wall. Stain looked at it in confusion, which meant he was still staring in the wrong direction when Nedzu retracted the wire and used the momentum to fly at Stain and kick him in the head with his entire body weight.

Izuku took that as his cue to grab Iida and Native and run. Behind him, he could hear Nedzu growling and biting as Stain tried to dislodge him. It was hard to believe that the normally composed principal was capable of defeating the hero killer alone, but more heroes should be showing up soon, so Izuku needed to prioritize the rescue. He didn't stop running until he reached the street.

He propped Iida and Native against the opposite wall so he still had a clear view of the alley in case Nedzu needed help, "Are you two ok?"

"I still can't move." Native said weakly. "Other than that, just some stab wounds and some road rash from when you dragged me."

Izuku winced, "I'm so sorry! It's just with the two of you…"

"It's alright Midoirya." Iida said. "It's better than what would have happened to us if we had stayed in the hands of that murderer. Thank you."

"Speaking of, why did I have to save you, Iida?" Izuku knew that the stress of the situation was probably getting to him, but he couldn't help snapping at him. "Why wouldn't you just talk to us? How could you possibly think that seeking revenge was a good idea?"

Iida bowed slightly, “I...I wasn’t thinking. All I could focus on was my anger.”

“Wait…” Native looked at Iida in shock. “Can you move?”

Iida’s eyes widened and he raised his hand slowly, “Yes! I...how?”

Izuku’s brain was rushing again, “Stain’s quirk must have a time limit.”

“But that can’t be right.” Native said. “I was paralyzed before Ingenium even showed up and I still can’t move.”

“Maybe the size of the cut?” Izuku said. “But you both have similar sized stab wounds. Wait, considering the size of his tongue...did he lick the blades before you were paralyzed?”

Iida and Native exchanged a glance and Iida nodded, “I believe so, yes.”

“I just thought he was being weird.” Native said.

Izuku shook his head, “It most likely has to do with blood type. So you have different blood types?”

“I’m B.” Native said.

“And I’m A.” Iida said.

“Ok.” Izuku muttered absently. “So it has a different time limit based on blood type, but that means that there’s no way of knowing how his quirk will affect Nedzu, since human blood types don’t translate into animals. Will Stain’s quirk even work on him? Unless of course the scientists spliced human DNA into him along with all the other animals they used…”

The sounds of the fight could still be heard from the alley and Izuku glanced over to see that the smoke had mostly cleared. Nedzu was still holding his own, using a combination of punches and bites to target Stain’s pressure points and ligaments. One of the hero killer’s arms was already hanging limply by his side, and he seemed to be trying to stay in one place as much as possible, so Nedzu had probably managed to injure at least one of his legs, but Izuku knew better than most how easily adrenaline could numb even sever pain, so whatever injuries Stain had, it probably wouldn't hold him back for long, “We should help. Other heroes should be showing up soon, but until then,

we can't leave Nedzu to fight alone. Are you with me Iida?"

Iida nodded and stood.

"Are you two crazy?" Native asked. "You're just two students! He just about killed you last time."

"We have to try." Iida said. "It's my fault Nedzu is even fighting the hero killer, I can't let him die!"

"Midoriya? Iida?"

Izuku turned and saw Todoroki and Endeavor running toward them, "Todoroki?"

"Where's the hero killer?" Endeavor scowled. "Is this your idea of a prank?"

Izuku returned Endeavor's glare and pointed to the alley, where the sound of metal on concrete was still clearly audible, "Hurry. There's already a hero here, but he won't be able to defeat Stain alone."

Endeavor ran into the alley and Izuku breathed a sigh of relief. As terrible a person as Endeavor was, his skill at taking down villains was undeniable. Nedzu would be alright. What now? Oh, right, first aid.

"Todoroki, can you make some ice for Iida and Native? We need to stop the bleeding and the cold will help with that."

Todoroki nodded and handed Izuku a chunk of ice before crouching beside Native and frosting over his right hand to apply pressure to his shoulder. Izuku made Iida sit down again and started trying to stop the bleeding from the hole in his arm. Most of his medical supplies were in the utility belt he'd given to Nedzu, but maybe Todoroki had a few?

"You're not hurt, are you Midioriya?" Todoroki asked suddenly.

Izuku shook his head, "I'm fine. Stain didn't really have a chance to hurt me before Nedzu stepped in…"

Speaking of Nedzu, he chose that moment to scurry out of the alley, looking scorched as he patted his arms frantically to put out the little flames and embers that had gotten caught in his fur, "Why did it have to be Endeavor who came to our aid? It's like he didn't even care that I was there! Oh, hello Todoroki, how is your internship going?"

Todoroki seemed surprised by Nedzu actually acknowledging him, “Fine…”

Nedzu nodded, “And you’re already applying first aid, very good. I’m happy to see that Aizawa hasn’t been slacking in our training. How is everyone doing?”

Now that Nedzu was safe and Izuku could actually get a good look at him, he noticed that he could use some first aid himself. In addition to small burns from Endeavor, Nedzu was bleeding from multiple injuries, and since he’d been fighting Stain at close range, Izuku’s theory about him being immune to stain’s quirk because of a non-human blood-type was probably correct. Hopefully Stain would be in prison before they had to use that knowledge though.

“We are doing as well as can be expected, Principal Nedzu, sir!” Iida said. “Thank you and Midoriya for coming to our aid.”

Nedzu’s expression hardened, “Iida, we will be addressing this before you return to UA.”

Iida swallowed and bowed his head, “I understand. I must apologize…”

Izuku tuned out Iida’s rambling apology as he suddenly realized it was a bit cooler than it had been since Endeavor had first joined the fight. Had he beaten the hero killer already? Izuku glanced over toward the alley and his eyes widened.

Endeavor was crumpled on the ground. His ever-present flames were gone and the only sign he was even still alive was the intense look of hatred on his face. The hero killer limped toward him, sword sparking as he dragged it on the concrete. For the second time that night, Izuku didn’t have time to think before he was already moving.

Hosu

Chapter Summary

The fight with Stain continues.

Chapter Notes

PLEASE READ
First off, I want to thank everyone who has been enjoying this story. You guys encourage me so much and I am so lucky to have all of you.
Unfortunately, I regret to announce that this fic *will be going on hiatus!* This is because I have reached the point where I am kinda burned out from this story and after almost six months of continuous updates, I need a break. I am not abandoning this fic, and this will not affect my other stories, but I need to let this story sit for a couple months until my muse comes back from war. I do not know when I'll be coming back to this one, but it will be at least two months.
Thank you, and now back to the fic.

Izuku still wasn't allowed to carry live ammo, considering that he was still a student, so he would have to make due with his rubber bullets, but if he truly wanted to stop Stain, then he couldn't afford to pull any punches. He aimed for center mass and fired five times in quick succession, trying to hit the same place each time to maximize damage. It wasn't nice, but it worked. Stain grunted and stopped in his tracks before looking up at Izuku with fanatic hatred in his eyes. When he began advancing again, it was toward Izuku rather than Endeavor.

"Todoroki, make sure Native is covered with an ice wall." Nedzu said calmly. "You and Iida have my permission to use your quirks to protect him and one another, but do not put yourselves in any more danger than necessary."

Todoroki didn't waste any time creating a dome of ice, and Iida's face shone with determination. Izuku's mind raced with strategies as Stain finally stepped out of the alley. Four on one was much better odds than they'd had the whole fight, and the wider space of the street would make it much easier for both Iida and Todoroki to use their quirks. There were more buildings to worry about here, not to mention the people inside, but no one here had very destructive

quirks, with the exception of Endeavor and Todoroki. Todoroki was always careful to avoid as much damage as he could, and Endeavor…

“Todoroki, what’s Endeavor’s blood type?”

“AB.” Todoroki replied.

“Ok, his recovery time will probably be between Iida’s and Native’s then.” Izuku muttered. “Nedzu can’t be affected by Stain’s quirk and we don’t know how it affects me yet, but I’m out of bullets, so…Ok, Nedzu and I will focus on close range, Todoroki will cover us, and Iida will focus on hit and run tactics. Sound good?”

There was a round of nods and Nedzu looked almost proud beneath his determination, so Izuku thought he’d done a pretty good job. Iida moved first, picking up speed and taking a page out of Izuku’s book as he aimed a kick at Stain’s weapon, trying to knock the katana out of his hand. He wasn’t quite fast enough, but he managed to dodge when Stain swiped at him and Nedzu took advantage of Stain’s distraction to bite Stain’s uninjured leg.

Meanwhile, Izuku had holstered his gun and was gripping his knives as though his life depended on them. Todoroki was busy creating thin layers of black ice wherever Stain stepped and it was only the spikes on his shoes that kept him from slipping. Iida was going for another pass, so Izuku needed to take advantage of that. He waited until Stain’s eyes were on Iida’s leg before he ran forward and stabbed him in the shoulder.

Stain grunted and headbutted Izuku before he could retreat. Izuku sniffed as he felt warm liquid running down his chin and he scrambled back before Stain could get the blood. Of all the times to get a bloody nose!

Stain was starting to change the way he fought, ignoring his own injuries with a tinge of desperation as his goal changed from getting out of the fight to taking down as many heroes as he could before the fight was over. Nedzu was forced to let go as Stain tried to cut off his head with a sword and Iida had a knife stuck deep in the muscle of one of his legs. The hero killer had taken advantage of the brief reprieve to attack Todoroki with a barrage of throwing knives, most of which had gotten caught in an ice wall, but one of which had buried itself in his right arm.

They needed to end this fight.

The nomu that Endeavor had left him to fight seemed to have a quirk that let it absorb attacks, then boomerang them back on the attacker, so Mirio was still having to spend a good part of the battle going intangible to avoid Endeavor's flames that the nomu had absorbed. Not to mention the fact that it's tongue was extendable and it seemed to be trying to use it like Kamui Woods' lacquered chain prison, so it seemed like he'd been using Permeation more than One for All in this fight. If Mirio hadn't been able to phase, he would have been done for before this fight even began!

That being said, he needed to find some way to take this guy down quickly. If the screams and panic in the rest of the city were any indication, this was far from the only nomu in Hosu tonight, which meant that they needed him! He could just try to punch it, but then he'd have to be extra careful of it's fists so that he didn't end up on the wrong end of a One for All enhanced punch. But if he could take the nomu's fists out…

Mirio grinned. Deku would be so proud of him for this idea! It would require simultaneous activation of both his quirks, so if he could pull this off, he could totally brag about it non-stop when UA started up again! Mirio ran forward and ducked beneath the nomu's next attack to grab it by both wrists, then went completely intangible except for his hands, which were sparking with the power of One for All. He used both gravity and his quirk to pull the Nomu into the ground, wincing slightly as the dirt and rocks of the road scratched his hand. When he reactivated his tangibility, he shot up and punched the nomu in the jaw, leaving it unconscious with its arms buried up to the shoulder in the ground.

"Good work, kid." Gran said roughly. "Good use of your brain. Now come on, we've got some more monsters to fight."

"The word *hero* has lost all meaning in this society!" Stain screamed out his ideology louder and louder as the fight wore on. "The world is overrun by fakes and criminals like you who chase petty dreams! You must all be purged! The only one allowed to kill me is All Might!"

Izuku didn't bother to reply, he had to find some way to disable Stain's quirk. With so many injuries, once would think that Stain should be slowing down, but his conviction was so fanatic that he was actually speeding up the longer they fought. He'd almost gotten his hands on Iidas blood two or three times and it was only the fact that they'd moved the fight into the wider street that Iida had been able to

gather enough speed to get away before he could. If Izuku could even just…

Dang it. Eraser was going to ground him again, wasn't he?

Izuku waited until Iida and Nedzu created an opening before running straight toward Stain's face, not bothering to wipe away the blood on his own face before he did so. He needed to bait Stain into trying to get his blood. He might be practically useless after this, but he wasn't fighting alone, and if this worked, then Iida would be able to fight much more freely.

As planned, the moment that Izuku was in range, Stain's tongue shot out of his mouth. Izuku was vaguely aware of his classmates screaming at him to watch out, but Izuku simply pivoted and grabbed the tongue, yanking it tight and his knife flashed as he tried to create as many shallow cuts on it as he could before Stain managed to lick his blood. He managed about three before his body froze and he fell to the ground.

Izuku struggled not to giggle hysterically as he realized that his plan had worked even better than he'd hoped. He'd just been planning on injuring Stain's tongue so that using his quirk would be painful, but he'd still be holding tight when Stain had taken his blood. When he'd frozen, Izuku's hand had clenched even tighter around Stain's tongue and he'd yanked the hero killer down with him when he'd fallen to the floor. By trapping him, the hero killer had trapped himself.

The only problem now was the fact that Izuku was now trapped in close quarters with a killer that had access to near-unlimited knives and there was zero chance of getting out of range. Stain's eyes burned with hatred as he raised his knife to stab Izuku through the heart, but Iida was already running. When he kicked Stain in the head hard enough to punt him a meter down the street, Izuku had no choice but to go along for the ride. Thankfully, Stain didn't move again.

"Iida, Todoroki, confiscate all his weapons in case he wakes up." Nedzu ordered. "Midoriya, are you alright?"

"A little scraped and bruised, but otherwise I'm fine." Izuku responded. "I still can't move though, so hopefully type O doesn't have a very long recovery time."

"That was insane, Midoriya." Todoroki said as he started pulling knives from every nook and cranny. He'd already melted the ice wall protecting Native, who was starting to stand up slowly.

“I must agree.” Iida said. “How did you know that your strategy would capture the hero killer?”

This time, Izuku didn’t bother to hold back his nervous laughter, “I didn’t. That was just luck.”

Mirio was grinning. The second nomu was much easier to take down than the first had been, now that he knew what to expect, and the heroes who had been fighting it nodded to him gratefully as he stepped away from the unconscious body. From the chatter over the radio, there had been three, so there was only one to go, assuming that no one else had managed to take that one down yet.

“It’s getting away!”

“Where’s it headed?!”

Mirio looked around, and it was only when he saw some other heroes running and pointing up that he noticed that the final nomu was *flying* . Mirio glanced at Gran Torino, who nodded, and then both of them were off, using their quirks to bounce off buildings, trying to catch up to the nomu before it could get away.

Thankfully it didn’t take more than a few minutes for Izuku to be able to move again. By that time, Endeavor had recovered as well and was standing guard over Stain, who was currently tied up with several pairs of quirk-suppressing cuffs from the heroes as well as some rope that Todoroki had found in the dumpster. Endeavor was glaring at Izuku with more malice than he knew was possible and the heat was oppressive until Izuku was able to scramble away and stand by Todoroki’s right side.

Nedzu smiled at Izuku and seemed to be about to say something when he suddenly looked up and his fur bristled, “Get down!”

Izuku whipped around to look up, only to see a flying nomu coming straight towards them. Further down the street, he could see the light from Toogata’s second quirk as he and another hero gave chase.

“Everybody look out!” Toogata yelled. “Get to cover!”

Before they could scatter, however, the nomu dipped down and grabbed Izuku around the waist, then immediately started ascending again, even faster than before.

Mirio was panicking. The monster had Deku. It had Deku and it was flying too fast and too high for Gran to be able to reach it. He couldn't fly, so he couldn't reach it, either, the most air he could get was when...was when the ground spat him out.

Mirio quickly calculated the trajectory the nomu was on, then took a deep breath and let himself go intangible and fall through the air, then through the street. His lungs were starting to burn, but he couldn't afford to go tangible too early, not if he wanted to save Deku. He let himself fall further than he ever had before, then turned tangible.

He accelerated the longer he flew through the dirt, gaining speed until he launched out of the ground and shot straight toward the nomu, who was now far above the buildings. Deku was calling for help and his eyes widened as he saw Mirio smiling at him right before he punched the nomu with as much power as he could muster, knocking it unconscious and forcing it to let go of Deku, who started to fall.

Mirio reached a hand out toward him, and Deku latched onto it like a lifeline, allowing Mirio to shift them in midair so Deku was clinging to his back. Mirio bounced off the buildings like a pinball on the way down to diminish the force before they finally skidded to a stop near the group of heroes and first years and...was that the hero killer?!

None of them noticed the civilian in one of the apartments overlooking the street and the alley, who had been recording the fight on his phone ever since the first gunshot had woken him up.

Viral

Chapter Summary

We're back!!!

Chapter Notes

Hi! We're back! Sorry to keep you waiting for so long!
Update schedule for this story will be once a week, either on Saturday or Sunday, depending on how my week goes and the mood of my muse.
Thank you for loving this story and I hope you enjoy the second season!

The nyan cat song echoed through the training hall and Eraserhead looked absolutely done with their shit as Joke and Hitoshi both dissolved into poorly concealed giggles, “Alright, which one of you changed my ringtone when I wasn’t looking?”

“Hey, don’t look at me.” Hitoshi said innocently, though the effect was kinda ruined by the smile that he couldn’t wipe off his face. “I don’t have your password. That’s something reserved for your *girlfriend.”*

Aizawa glared at him for another moment as Joke finally lost control of herself and started full on snorting, “Oh Shouta! You should see your face right now!”

“I see it in the mirror constantly.” Aizawa said dryly. “I’m going to go answer this and when I get back, we’re going to have a chat about personal possessions and *revenge.”*

The moment the door closed behind him, Hitoshi took one look at Joke and started laughing even harder, “We’re totally gonna regret that one, aren’t we?”

“Oh, 100%.” Joke responded with a grin. “But it was worth it. I can’t believe you actually brainwashed him into unlocking his phone for us.”

Hitoshi smirked, “Hey, it counts as quirk training! ”

“I think you’re just loopy from adjusting to the nocturnal sleep schedule that underground heroes have.” Joke teased.

“I have insomnia.” Hitoshi rolled his eyes. “You can’t adjust something that never existed in the first place.”

They were still grinning when Aizawa came back in, looking grim, “Hitoshi, train with the capture weapon for a few minutes. Emi, can I talk to you for a second?”

Hitoshi felt the smile slowly slide off his face as Aizawa took Emi aside and started talking in low voices so he couldn’t hear what they were saying. That last prank hadn’t really been any worse than the ones they’d been pulling on Aizawa all week, even if it was a little more bold than most of their others, so Aizawa’s sudden change in mood must be about the content of the phone call, not the ringtone. Hitoshi didn’t know if that was more or less concerning.

By the time the two finished talking, Joke’s mood had dipped to match Aizawa’s and Hitoshi was starting to get worried.

“I have something I need to check on.” Aizawa said simply. “Shinso, I’m leaving you here with Emi until I get back. Don’t slack off on your training.”

Hitoshi nodded obediently and Aizawa gave Joke a quick peck on the cheek before walking back out the door.

“Um…did something happen?” Hitoshi asked hesitantly.

Joke sighed, “You’ll probably find out soon enough. I’m sure it’ll be all that the vultures are gonna be talking about for the next week, but for right now, let’s enjoy the last little bit of productivity, alright? There were a couple things I wanted to explore with you anyway without Shouta breathing down our necks.”

“You’re the one who chose to seduce him, but ok.” Hitoshi shrugged nonchalantly, pretending that it wasn’t taking every ounce of willpower to not immediately die of curiosity. “What did you have in mind?”

Joke gave him a shit-eating grin, “Knock knock!”

“Seriously?” Hitoshi did his best to imitate Aizawa's go-to expression, but wasn’t sure he got it quite right, since Joke’s smile just got impossibly wider. “If you’re just gonna mess with me, you may as well tell me what that phone call was about.”

“Come on!” Joke laughed. “I swear this is important! Just play along!”

Hitoshi sighed loudly, “Alright. Who’s there?”

In lieu of a response, Joke just giggled.

Hitoshi rolled his eyes, “Seriously? You tell me to play along and then don’t even finish the joke? You’re lucky I don’t brainwash you.”

Joke raised one eyebrow and gestured for him to continue, a small smile on her face the whole time like she was *challenging* him to brainwash her. But that didn’t make any sense, because she hadn’t responded to his *who’s there* ? Wait…was she trying to get him to tell jokes to get responses?

“You know, I really doubt that villains are going to respond to knock knock jokes in the middle of a fight.” He deadpanned.

“You’d actually be surprised.” Joke said. “Villains do the darndest things, and sometimes a well placed joke will throw them for enough of a loop that they’ll completely forget about the fight or, more conveniently in your case, your quirk. But that’s not what I was going for.”

She sat down on the floor and patted the ground next to her until Hitoshi gave in and joined her, “Shinso, we know that your quirk works based on verbal responses, but we haven’t yet explored what *counts* as a verbal response. Words do, obviously, but things like laughter or snorts or groans? They’re audible too, so they might just activate your quirk and give you even more tools to use so you don’t have to act like an asshole all the time”

“But I *am* an asshole all the time.” Hitoshi grinned. Ms. Joke shoved him and he laughed, “Fine! Fine! So, um…if knowledge is knowing that tomatoes are a fruit, then is wisdom knowing not to put them in a fruit salad?”

Joke immediately dissolved into giggles and Hitoshi reached for his quirk but, disappointingly, realized that hadn’t been enough to form the mental connection he needed. He frowned and shook his head.

“No luck?” Joke pouted. “Fine, let’s try again. Laughter doesn’t cut it, but maybe another response will?”

Hitoshi wasn’t quite as convinced, but he shrugged and tried to think of another joke, “Dang it, you’re probably better at these than I am, but…uh…if you think nobody cares you’re alive, why don’t you try missing a few payments?”

Joke snorted this time and Hitoshi tried to activate his quirk again, scowling in frustration when it went about as well as their first experiment.

“Still no?” Joke frowned for a moment, then smiled. “Alright, one more time, and choose a really dumb joke this time.”

Hitoshi rolled his eyes. It had been a good thought and adding some knock knock jokes or something to his go to ways of getting responses probably wouldn’t be a bad idea, but whatever Joke had in mind wasn’t going to work.

“Please?” Joke pouted. “Just one more try and I won’t tell Shouta you saved him as *Eraserdad* in your phone.”

Hitoshi froze, “You wouldn’t.”

Joke grinned, “I would. Come on, Shinso, one more joke, the dumber the better. Hit me.”

“Don’t tempt me.” Hitoshi muttered. “Uh…did you know that a clear conscience is usually a sign of a bad memory?”

Ms. Joke groaned and Hitoshi couldn’t hold back a small smile, even as he halfheartedly reached for his quirk. This time, however, it actually worked.

“What?!” Hitoshi couldn’t stop his jaw from dropping as he lost his control over her, “Seriously?! How did that work?”

“Beats me.” Joke shrugged. “But it probably has something to do with the fact that groans use the vocal cords, whereas laughs and snorts don’t necessarily. I don’t know, but what I *do* know is that this opens a whole slew of amazing opportunities.”

“I seriously have to learn the dumbest jokes in existence?” Hitoshi groaned and pulled out his phone to google dumb jokes, apparently. “The things I do to be a hero.”

“Wait!” Joke reached to stop him just as Hitoshi unlocked his phone, but she wasn’t fast enough to stop him from being assaulted by a million notifications. His eyes widened as his eyes scanned the headlines.

“The…the hero killer…UA students…” He glared at Joke accusingly. “Is this what that phone call Aizawa got was about? Why didn’t you

tell me?!"

"Because it wouldn't have made much of a difference, Shinso." Joke sighed. "The hospital isn't allowing a lot of visitors right now…"

"The hospital?!" Hitoshi read through the notifications again, looking for the names of which students were involved. It had to be at least one student from class 1A if Aizawa was allowed to visit already, and Hitoshi had a sinking suspicion he knew exactly which one it was.

"Deku wasn't hurt *badly!"* Joke tried to calm him down, but she was having the exact opposite effect. "If he was, all the security in the world wouldn't be enough to keep me out of that hospital room. From what Shouta said, the most injured one was Iida, but Todoroki also had a couple scrapes. It's not bad! But, apparently somebody caught footage of part of the fight, so security at the hospital is having to work overtime to keep *intrepid reporters* from bothering those poor kids."

Hitoshi scrolled through the seemingly endless articles that had already been published despite the fact that the attack had concluded less than an hour ago until he finally found the video and clicked on it. The footage was shaky, obviously taken on a cell phone as whoever was recording struggled to get their window open with one hand.

"There was a gunshot…" The guy behind the camera said shakily. "It woke me up, but there's a lot of other stuff going on too, and then there was another gunshot just now. I think...what the...what's happening?"

The guy had finally managed to open the window and he zoomed in on a few figures standing in an alleyway across the street. Hitoshi didn't know who the guy holding a katana was, but the one he was standing off with was obviously Midoriya and the one on the ground must be Iida, considering that he was dressed all in white armor, not that it seemed to have helped him much.

The guy recording was too far away from the fight to get any audio, so it came as a complete surprise when Stain lunged forward and the alley filled with a bright light. When the camera readjusted, the alley was filled with smoke and it seemed like forever, but was probably only a few tense moments before Midoriya came running out of the alley dragging Iida and someone else that Hitoshi hadn't even realized was there.

He was vaguely aware that Joke had come up behind him and was

watching over his shoulder as Endeavor and Todoroki arrived. Endeavor immediately launched himself into the fight, interrupting the other hero who had already been fighting the guy. Was that Nedzu? It had to be, since that was who Midoriya had been interning with. Joke gasped as they saw the villain move in a blur, running *through* the flames, probably enduring ridiculous burns just to get close to Endeavor, who...wait, did Endeavor just collapse?

"Oh my god…" The guy holding the camera sounded shocked and slightly terrified and the camera started to shake. "I think that's the hero killer. That's the fucking hero killer!"

It was then that Midoriya, like the idiot he apparently was, *shot the hero killer.* His rubber bullets obviously weren't enough to take him down, but they were enough to save Endeavor's life and give the heroes a chance to regroup and move the fight onto the street. It was then that Hitoshi realized that the fight was close enough to the camera now for the phone to pick up some of the audio, at least the parts that the hero killer was shouting at the top of his lungs.

"The word *hero* has lost all meaning in this society!" He was starting to fight even more desperately as he was overwhelmed by a pro and three hero students. "The world is overrun by fakes and criminals like you who chase petty dreams! You must all be purged! The only one allowed to kill me is All Might!"

Honestly, Hitoshi had to admit that the guy had a point. A lot of heroes were really only in it for the fame more than the desire to save people, but that didn't give him the right to try to kill Hitoshi's classmates after he'd worked so damn hard to get into the hero course!

Hitoshi facepalmed as he watched Midoriya grab the hero killer's tongue and use the hero killer's own quirk against him to trap him. Only he would think of something so brilliant and simultaniously stupid at the same time. If Hitoshi wasn't 100% certain that Aizawa was already going to ground that idiot, he'd be tempted to find a way to do it himself. Maybe he'd figure out a way to use his quirk to do it.

The fight was over and the guy seemed like he was about to stop recording when the people on the street started shouting again.

"Get down!"

"Everybody look out! Get to cover!"

Joke screamed as a *freaking Nomu* came out of nowhere, grabbed Midoriya, and started flying off with him to god knew where. Hitoshi *knew* Midoriya would be alright. Otherwise Joke wouldn't be there and Aizawa wouldn't be going to visit his problem child in the hospital. None of that stopped Hitoshi from cheering when that creepy third year who sometimes popped out of the walls came shooting from the floor and punched the Nomu in the face, carrying Midoriya to safety.

There was a few more minutes of footage as the police arrived and first aid was administered before the guy finally stopped recording. He must have uploaded the video almost immediately, considering how many views the video already had.

"Well, I see what you meant now." Hitoshi said finally. "But I think this is gonna keep the vultures busy for a lot longer than a week."

Publicity

Chapter Summary

> Aizawa visits his problem child in the hospital.

Chapter Notes

> Sorry, I'm not going to link any art this chapter because I need to leave for work in a few minutes, but I wanted to get this out. I'll try to link some next week!

Eraserhead slammed open the door without any preamble, quirk already activated even though he knew full well that it wouldn't have any effect on Izuku, "You're grounded."

Izuku sighed in resignation, "I know."

Considering that they had just finished fighting a serial killer a few hours ago, he thought they were doing rather well, with the exception of maybe Iida, who was definitely the most injured of the three of them. Izuku had gotten out of the fight with just a few cuts and gashes from stain and the Nomu in addition to some road rash and bruising, while Todoroki had hardly been injured at all. Their miraculous evasion of injuries, however, wouldn't stop Izuku from being grounded for what he pulled.

In his defense, though, Iida deserved to be grounded too.

"What were you thinking?!" Eraser yelled. "Are you aware that you're going *viral* right now?!"

Izuku grimaced. He...was unfortunately aware of that fact. There was a reason all three of them had switched their phones to silent shortly after arriving at the hospital. That hadn't stopped one of the orderlies from asking for their autographs, but at least they were *mostly* able to pretend that the whole mess hadn't been caught on camera.

"Aizawa-sensei!" If he hadn't had both his arms heavily bandaged, Izuku had no doubt that Iida would be chopping the air sternly. "Such volume is inappropriate in a hospital, esspecially since it is still the middle of the…"

Aizawa turned his glare on Iida, "Don't even get me started on you. You're lucky I don't expel you right now. The only reason why I'm not

is that Nedzu said he's already taking care of your discipline, but as far as I'm concerned, you're on thin fucking ice. Understood?"

Iida shrunk down in his bed contritely, allowing Aizawa to focus his full wrath on his original target, "Back to you, Deku, what were you thinking?! You're supposed to be an *underground hero* and I *know* Nedzu wasn't stupid enough to tell you to seek out the hero killer, so…"

"I wasn't tracking the hero killer!" Izuku said quickly. "You know that if I had been, I would have called for the appropriate back-up *before* getting to the fight. We were just looking for evidence against Endeavor, but then the Nomus showed up and Manuel was looking for Iida and we were hoping we were wrong, but…"

"Wait, what?"

Izuku froze and turned to look at Todoroki. To someone who didn't know him well, Todoroki looked as blank as ever, but to Izuku he looked...well, not blank. Shocked and confused were probably the closest emotions, but there was also a hefty dose of what Izuku could only describe as *buffering*.

"Uh…" Izuku smiled awkwardly, "...surprise?"

Todoroki looked at him in confusion, "Why?"

"Uh…" Izuku looked at Aizawa, who just raised an eyebrow, making it clear that Izuku was on his own. Ok, fair, he deserved that. "Um, why surprise? Or why was I gathering evidence on Endeavor? Because I feel like those are two different questions."

"I believe Todoroki-kun wanted to know why you were compiling evidence against his father!" Iida said. "That seems a bit rude to do to one's friend, Midoriya!"

"Oh no, it's fine." Todoroki assured him quickly, and Izuku was fairly certain that Aizawa had ducked further into his capture weapon to hide a snort. "But yes, the second question is more important."

"To get enough info to bring him down of course!" Nedzu popped out from behind Izuku's pillow, nearly giving everyone except for Izuku, who had guessed he was probably there, a heart attack. Aizawa and Todoroki hid their shock better than Iida did, considering that he actually jumped out of bed. "Young Midoriya has been effectively running a smear campaign against the number two hero for weeks

now, gradually chipping away at public opinion so we can completely destroy his career!"

Izuku grimaced again, "I, uh, I think he just managed to do that himself, though…"

"Don't sell yourself short, problem child." Aizawa huffed. "Those articles you wrote already destabilized his foundation. If people weren't already wondering about Endeavor's competence as a hero, his PR team could probably spin this whole thing as an unlucky break against a villain that's bested dozens of other heroes, but as it is, it's gonna be a scandal."

Izuku looked at him in shock, which made Aizawa roll his eyes, "What? You didn't think I'd recognize your work, problem child? Honestly, I'm not surprised Nedzu has you doing something like this in your private lessons."

"You wrote those articles?" Todoroki stared at him with wide eyes. "Really?"

"Midoriya-kun!" Iida looked positively scandalized. "You are supposed to be a hero and Todoroki-kun's friend! What could ever possess you to destroy his father like…"

"Murder?" Izuku reminded him, Iida flinched. "You don't have any room to talk, Iida. And the situation is a lot more complicated than that, and it just got a lot *more* complicated…"

"Why?" Todoroki asked. "If you were trying to destroy my father's career, good riddance, by the way, shouldn't it be a good thing that the bastard did the work for you?"

"We had a *plan!"* Izuku whined. "We were going to gradually lower public opinion over the course of several months to limit the impact on society, but now…"

"Now there's no way that Endeavor's disgrace won't have a ripple effect." Aizawa rubbed his eyes tiredly. "Wonderful."

"It's even worse than that." Nedzu pointed out, making himself comfortable in the pile of blankets on Izuku's bed that he'd somehow managed to steal without anyone noticing. "Endeavor may as well be the hero killer's final victim."

"But Midoirya saved him." Iida pointed out. "He didn't even have any

lasting injuries."

"No, but Stain managed to shout his ideals to the world, thanks to that video." Izuku sighed. "Endeavor's incompetence at fighting him simply proves his point and will make it more likely for people to buy into Stain's opinion that hero society is corrupt. Basically, society was always going to get shaken up, but because of the hero killer's society, that change will most likely be channeled into villainy."

"Very good!" Nedzu said proudly. "Or, well, not *good,* but of course Midoriya is correct. We'll have to manage this very carefully in the coming months, of course, and see if we can't minimize the damage."

"Problem child." Aizawa sounded like he was ready to crawl into this sleeping bag and never come out and it would all be izuku's fault. "I thought I told you that your private lessons with Nedzu *weren't* to learn world domination."

Izuku gave a guilty smile, "I'm not trying to take over the world, Eraser...I'm just trying to control society's perception of things."

Aizawa sighed loudly and turned to look at Nedzu, "I suppose this means we're pushing the dorms forward."

"Of course!" Nedzu replied cheerily. "They'll be ready to open by the end of internships! These three have provided the perfect excuse for the change, of course!"

"Wait, dorms?" Izuku's eyes widened. "Of course! We won't need to worry about Endeavor getting angrier and hurting todoroki because he won't be able to get to him!"

"Exactly!" Nedzu smiled. "Though I would encourage your sister to move out or move in with your brother for the time being."

Todoroki nodded, noticeably lighter as Izuku realized he'd been worried about reciving the brunt of Endeavor's poor publicity, "She's a smart girl, but is Endeavor going to agree?"

Nedzu's eyes twinkled ominously, "He won't have a choice. He can't afford to have any more negative publicity right now."

"Is anyone going to explain what's going on?!" Iida exclaimed. "I am highly confused."

"We're switching UA to the dorms to get me away from my bastard of

a father.” Todoroki said simply.

Izuku had to poorly stifle a giggle both at Todoroki’s blunt reply and at Iida’s shocked reaction. Of course, Iida had a wonderful family, he probably didn’t understand why Todoroki would be so okay with Izuku destroying his father’s career. Oh well, maybe by the time they were done, it might make a little more sense.

“But…” Izuku frowned slightly, “we were attacked during a UA sanctioned internship. Won’t that call the school’s ability to protect us into question.”

“You were also saved by the UA principal!” Nedzu said gleefully. “I’ve already announced the press conference!”

“Of course you have.” Aizawa groaned. “I’m not sure I even want to know what the hell class is going to get up to now that they’ll be living together.”

Introspection

Chapter Summary

The return of everyone's favorite hero.

Chapter Notes

As promised. Here is some art!
Liz_Cygibi_386
Doodle
Kattrina123
I'm Totally a Fish
Ro

Memes

X X X X X X X X X

“Are you sure about this?” Toshinori asked, looking down at the list of students’ parents he’d been assigned to visit about the new dorm system.

“Of course!” Nedzu chirped. “You *are* a teacher and you’ll have Aizawa right by your side to help you! If it’s the timing you’re worried about, wouldn’t it be best to get these visits done by the time our student’s internships officially end? That way, they simply come back and move straight into the dorms!”

“I suppose…” Toshinori said slowly.

It wasn’t the timing of these visits he was concerned about. It wasn’t even the fact that he was partnered with Aizawa, who very decidedly didn’t like him. No, it was that about halfway down the list, in clear print, was the name *Izuku Midoriya.*

Toshinori had decided to trust Nighteye. His old sidekick was often wiser than he was and had very rarely steered him wrong. Their problems were mostly disagreements about Toshinori’s well-being that both were too stubborn to change their opinions on. But realizing that didn’t get rid of the voice deep down that was still screaming that he would never have been able to be a hero if he hadn’t been lucky enough to inherit one for all. Did Nedzu even realize what he was asking?

He looked up, saw the glint in Nedzu's eye, and sighed. Yes, the rat knew exactly what he was doing. The main problem was that Toshinori *didn't.* He and Aizawa would never see eye to eye on the issue of Midoriya, so this visit was mostly going to be him biting his tongue and trying not to get in trouble and get Aizawa's expulsion stare. He shuddered. Even if he wasn't a student, he was sure that Aizawa would find a way to expel him if he messed up enough.

A knock at the door filled him with dread as it swung open to reveal Aizawa himself, looking preemptively pissed off about whatever Toshinori was going to do next.

Nedzu grinned widely and clapped his hands, "Well, you two have fun!"

Toshinsori gulped.

Hitoshi gripped the gift bag tighter as they walked toward Midoriya's room, trying not to give away the joke by cracking too early. He and Ms. Joke had spent the entire morning looking for the perfect gift and got away with calling it training because she had spent the whole time teaching him all the dumbest jokes in her repertoire and coaching him on proper joke delivery. Then, she had somehow managed to get permission to visit the UA students stuck in the hospital and snuck them past the media without them even noticing. Hitoshi had thought that Aizawa was amazing at stealth, and he was, but it was so weird seeing someone as bright and loud as Joke go completely unnoticed. He had a lot to learn.

Joke didn't bother knocking before throwing open the door, "What were you thinking?! Problem child!"

Midoriya gave her a guilty smile and Hitoshi realized that the doctors were in the middle of changing his bandages. Not too injured?! Sure, maybe he hadn't been stabbed, but with all the scrapes and gashes in various states of healing, the kid was going to have bandages all over his body! Hitoshi had had his suspicions during the sports festival, but this proved it. Midoriya was completely insane.

Oh well, it just made their gift all the more appropriate.

He shoved the bag onto Midoriya's lap, "We got you this."

Midoriya stammered and looked helplessly at Todoroki and Iida, who Hitoshi had just realized were in the room. Maybe they should have

gotten those two something as well? It was too late now, but the other two didn't seem jealous, not that it was that easy to read Todoroki's expression and Iida's was always some variation of stern, even when he was happy, so he could be wrong, but they mostly just seemed curious.

"Open it, you idiot." Joke insisted. "It's the least you can do after giving all of us a heart attack by *going off and fighting a serial killer!"*

Midoriya chuckled awkwardly and pulled out his gift. Hitoshi's mouth twitched up into a smile at Midoriyya's absolutely done expression as he held the shirt out in front of him and read the words printed on it.

"Cut and sew?" Midoriya glared at Ms. Joke. "Seriously?"

Joke doubled over laughing, and even the doctors started chuckling. Hitoshi looked over at Todoroki and Iida to gauge their reactions and finally gave into laughter when he saw the absolutely indignant expression on Iida's face. Todoroki, however, was cracking a small smile and his eyes were lit up in a chaotic light that HItoshi had never seen before. Oh, this was gonna be fun!

"Is that really what it says?" Todoroki almost looked excited. "Let us see."

Midoriya sighed and turned the shirt around. Sure enough, *cut and sew* was written across the front.

"We got it from the same brand as all your usual shirts." Hitoshi added helpfully. "I don't see why you're complaining when we obviously have to put a warning on you if you're going to keep running into dangerous situations."

HItoshi smirked and accepted Ms. Joke's high five. Midoriya gave them both an exaggerated betrayed expression, while Iida currently looked like he was about to explode.

"Shinso! Such a gift is entirely inappropriate!" Iida finally exclaimed. "You may be new to the hero course, but mocking your classmate like this…"

"It's fine, Iida." Midoriya cut him off. "It's all in good fun, so I don't really mind. They're not actually trying to hurt me, it's just funny!" He got a big grin on his face. "I wonder how Mom would react if I wore this when I went home?"

The mood in the car was tense. They'd managed to put aside their differences while actually talking to the student's families they'd gone to so far, but honestly all Toshinori could feel as they pulled up to the Midoriya residence was a growing sense of dread.

"Come on, let's get this over with." Aizawa said gruffly. "Just let me do the talking."

All Toshinori could do was nod stiffly before Aizawa was already slamming his door closed and walking to the apartment. Toshinsori followed hesitantly behind and got to the door just as it opened, revealing a woman with green hair who couldn't be anyone other than young Midoirya's mother.

"Oh, Aizawa!" Midoriya-san smiled widely. "How are you? Shouldn't you be at internships?"

"My intern is currently learning a thing or two from Emi." Aizawa sighed. "At least I hope he's learning. Actually, I think she might just be teaching him how to prank people. Can we come in?"

"Of course!" Midoriya-san stood to the side to allow the two to come in. Toshinori didn't know what he'd been expecting the apartment to look like, but if anyone had asked, he'd probably say that he'd been expecting a library to complement young Midoirya's intelligence. Instead, the house looked cozy and surprisingly normal for a place where one of the most controversial up-and-coming heroes had grown up.

Aizawa gestured boredly to Toshinori, "By the way, this is my co-worker Yagi. He's an assistant teacher at UA and no, I'm not going to tell you which hero he is, you know how important secrecy is in the heroics industry sometimes, just know that Nedzu assigned him to come along on these visits."

"All right, keep your secrets." Midoriya-san smiled. "So, I see that even Nedzu can't manage to keep my baby out of trouble. I went and visited Izuku in the hospital yesterday. He said you grounded him."

"He deserved it." Aizawa hid his face in his capture weapon. "Damn problem child."

Midoriya-san laughed, "Believe me, I know. I did raise him, after all. If there's anything I've learned about my son, it's that he will do what he believes to be right and he'll figure out how to make it work, despite whatever obstacles are in his way. In fact, he'll often use those

obstacles to help him in ways I would never have thought about. It's amazing!"

Aizawa sent Toshinori a heavy look, one that seemed to be trying to say *see?!* Toshinori decidedly didn't react.

"So, I'm sure you've already seen Nedzu's press conference, so you already know why we're here." Aizawa said finally.

"Ah yes, the dorms." Midoriya-san said. "I'd be lying if I said I wasn't worried, but...well, Izuku has a tendency to find trouble. At least if he's at UA, he has the tools and support he needs to deal with that."

Aizawa nodded, "Of course. I promise you that we'll do our best to protect your son."

Midoriya chuckled, "You can try, but...as long as Izuku's happy, you have my thanks."

Aizawa let out an amused huff and stood up, "Well, if you don't have any other questions, we'll be on our way. We need to finish these visits so I can get back to my intern before Emi somehow corrupts him. Have a good day Midoriya-san."

"I will, and congratulations by the way." MIdoriya-san's eyes twinkled with mischief. "I always thought you two would be a cute couple."

Aizawa glared at her before walking out the door, "You're dead to me."

Toshinori was about to follow, but hesitated by the door and looked back. Aizawa had said to leave the talking to him, but Toshinori felt like he *had* to know, "Midoriya-san. Do you truly believe your son is safest at UA?"

Midoriya-san looked at him with a kind of compassionate understanding that took him aback slightly, "You're talking about his quirklessness, right?" She didn't wait for him to confirm it before continuing. "If I'm being honest, if you had come to me a year ago and asked, I would have taken Izuku out of UA in a heartbeat. Anything to keep him safe, but...well, my son is many things, but weak is not one of them. I spent too many years thinking that just because he was quirkless, he may as well be made of glass, but...well…" she frowned and looked off into the distance, "Is his safety really worth the price of his happiness? Yes, I could lock him up here and protect him. He'd be safe. But then I wouldn't get to see his eyes light up the way they do

when he's analyzing a new quirk. I would get to see the pride in his eyes that I see whenever he comes home from a successful mission."

"So...even though it's dangerous…" Toshinori prompted.

She took a deep breath, "It's worth it. If my worry is what it takes for my son to be happy, then it's a price I'm more than willing to pay." She looked at Toshinori and he felt like she was staring deep into his soul. "Not every quirkless kid wants to be a hero, Yagi-san, but Izuku does. Treating him like something to be protected and put on a shelf isn't going to help anyone. So, yes, it's dangerous and it gives me a heart attack every time he puts on his hero costume, but...I truly believe my son can be a hero. Does that answer your question?"

Yagi didn't know how she'd peeled back his politeness and managed to answer his actual question, but he supposed that young Midoirya had to have gotten his observational skills from somewhere. He glanced over at the car, where Aizawa was glaring at him, probably about to storm back to the apartment and drag him away if he didn't leave soon, "Yes, um, that answered all my questions quite well, thank you. It was a pleasure to meet you."

He hurried to the car and got in, avoiding Aizawa's eyes. After a long moment Aizawa sighed and started the car, "Were you at least polite about whatever opinion you should have kept to yourself?"

Toshinori was too lost in his thoughts to respond. He just...one of the reasons he'd been so against young Midoirya becoming a hero since the beginning was because he'd *known* that he wouldn't have been able to be a hero without One for All, but, well, maybe if he'd had someone like young Midoriya's mother, who was willing to put his happiness and dreams above his safety…

Before he could think better of it, Toshinori texted Nedzu and asked for a few days off in the coming week or so. As terrifying as Gran Torino could be, he'd never steered him wrong before and there were so many different thoughts and opinions all whirling around inside his brain that Toshinori couldn't even tell where to begin. He didn't know if he was wrong, right, or just as much of an idiot as Aizawa seemed to think, but wanted to figure it out.

Nedzu sent his approval before they even reached the next student's house.

Return

Chapter Summary

Internships officially end.

Chapter Notes

Sorry to drop off the face of the earth, but civilian life got crazy! I should be back now!

Art!
Kaelan M

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

Also, the "cut and sew" joke from last chapter? Literally just that Izuku keeps getting injured and having to get stitches/repaired. That's it. That's the joke. I saw that it was one of the canon shirts and had to put it in a hospital scene. I literally couldn't resist.

Katsuki was sore, but smiling. He didn't know exactly why Miruko had insisted on walking him to the station, but he also wasn't complaining. While he would never admit it to her face, Bunny Bitch was pretty cool and for someone who loudly proclaimed that she didn't like working with other people, she was actually pretty damn good at it. She'd even somehow managed to keep him from exploding the entire apartment when the news had broken that Deku had somehow spent his internship fighting the *hero killer.* Sure, she'd pretty much just redirected all his explosions to her and then slammed him into the ground, but the harder spar had been enough to take the edge off all the complicated shit that was going on in his brain until he could talk to the mutt again.

They pushed through the crowds, blatantly ignoring all the curious stares and whispers that followed them as they made their way to the correct platform. They were just reaching the bottom of a set of stairs when a suicidal reporter decided it was a good idea to stand right in their path, "Katsuki Bakugo! You're in Class 1A, right? How do you feel about your classmates fighting the hero killer?"

Katsuki rolled his eyes and shoved his way past, not even dignifying the stupid bastard with a *no comment.* Couldn't these extras leave him

alone for long enough to get back to UA? Apparently not, because the guy jogged to keep up with them and kept asking dumb questions.

“Is Deku really quirkless? You went to the same school before UA, so did you know each other? Do you think the video was doctored to make him seem stronger than he is?”

“What the fuck?” Katsuki couldn’t help stopping in his tracks and looking at the reporter in exasperated confusion. “Why the fuck would anyone put in that much effort to make the nerd look stronger? He doesn’t even want to be popular!”

“Well, um…” The reporter stuttered slightly as he tried to organize whatever conspiracy bull was about to spew out of his mouth, but before he could continue Katsuki felt Miruko elbow him hard in the ribs. When he glowered up at her, she was wearing a sharp smile that he couldn’t help imitating as the two of them turned back to the reporter.

“Would you be able to fight a serial killer?” Miruko asked a little too pleasantly. “Even with whatever lame quirk you’ve got?”

“Um…”

“Deku may not have a quirk,” Katsuki grinned, “but he could still probably kick your ass. But he’ll never get a chance if I kick it first, which is what I’ll do if you don’t leave and let me get back to school.”

Katsuki held his hands at the ready for explosions to emphasize his point as the reporter squeaked and ran off. The crowd that had gathered to eavesdrop on the interaction started applauding and Katsuki grinned wider as Miruko held her sides in laughter.

“Yeah, a lotta heroes can’t get away with treating a reporter like that.” She chuckled. “So I’m glad I chose you. You get to be an asshole and call it your *brand!”*

“Whatever.” Katsuki rolled his eyes, but kept smiling. “Why *did* you choose me anyway? You never work in teams, much less take on interns and sidekicks like other heroes do.”

Miruko shrugged, “I wanted to see if you could kill me.”

Katsuki cocked an eyebrow skeptically, “Seriously?”

She laughed loudly, “Yep! I saw you fighting that gravity girl in the

sports festival and thought it'd be a nice change of pace to spar with someone who doesn't hold back or assume their opponent is weaker just because of a little thing like gender or quirk. It wasn't out of some weird desire to nurture the next generation or anything like that, I'm just selfish."

Katsuki scoffed as his train pulled into the station, "You're insane."

"So are you, Blasty." She cuffed him over the head, then put him in a headlock and ruffled his hair. "Now get outta here, you still gotta pack for those new dorms the rat just announced."

"Ugh, don't remind me." Katsuki pushed her away and ran a hand through his hair, which only succeeded in messing it up more. "I'm gonna have to deal with those idiots *all day."*

"Sucks to suck!" Miruko yeeted his bag onto the train, forcing Katsuki to chase after it and glare at her when the door to the train closed. "Good luck, Blasty!"

"Don't need it!" Katsuki yelled back. "I'm strong enough to fight when it counts!"

"Mom…" Momo asked slowly, folding another shirt and putting it neatly in one of the many open suitcases in her room. There was a lot of stuff to move into the dorms. "How...why did you decide to be a sexy hero?"

Mom stopped sorting through Momo's teas and frowned, "Momo, honey, what brought this on?"

"Well, um…" Momo hesitated. Would Mom be disappointed if she knew that Momo had learned more from Kendo on her internship than she had from Uwabami?

Mom sighed, "It was your internship, wasn't it? Uwabami...well, she used to be an amazing hero. Still is, in many ways, but while I try to use my fame to enhance my hero work, her and a lot of others do it the other way round."

"Oh…" Momo said softly. "So, uh...you decided to be sexy because it would help you be a better hero?"

Mom shook her head, "I decided to be sexy because I *wanted* to be." She said seriously. "It made me feel powerful."

“So, you didn’t decide on your brand because you had to be sexy to be a good hero?” Momo clarified. “You didn’t need to be sexy because that’s that the people needed or something?”

Mom wrinkled her nose in disgust, “God no! In fact, people made me change my first hero costume because what made me feel bad-ass was too much for some people. Honey,” Mom sat on the bad beside her, oversized sweater pooling around her as she grabbed both of Momo’s hands and looked her straight in the eye, “You should never make decisions based on the male gaze. You need to do what makes *you* feel good. For me, embracing my sexuality does that, but I didn’t decide on my brand to appeal to men or to be popular. You don’t owe anyone anything just to be popular. Does that make sense?”

“It’s just that Uwabami…” Momo started quietly.

“Isn’t the only expert.” Mom said decisively. “Popularity is important, but you know what else is important?”

“Saving people?” Momo suggested.

Mom shook her head, *“You.* You, Momo, are important. If you are happy and confident, you’ll be a better hero. If that means having a sexy costume, have a sexy costume! And if it doesn’t…”

“Then it would be ok to change my hero costume to something a little more practical?” Momo finished. “I was working with Kendo and we came up with a few ideas…”

Mom smiled softly, “Whatever makes you happy, honey.”

Toshinori paid the driver and steeled his nerve. When he’d told Gran Torino that he wanted to spend a few days visiting and that he had something he wanted to discuss with him, Gran had insisted they go to a cabin in the middle of the woods. He’d had it for as long as Toshinori had known him, saying that he needed a place to go off the grid when dealing with all the idiots in the hero industry got to be too much.

It was where they’d gone to hide away after Nana’s death.

He walked up the long driveway, coughing a few times as he dragged his small suitcase along the gravel. He hadn’t wanted to come back here, mostly because there was no place to run if Gran decided to knock some sense into him, but Gran had insisted.

“I can tell that whatever’s on your mind is important, Toshi, but you have this stupid habit of running off.” Toshinori had grimaced and coughed blood, but Gran had simply continued the phone call, his unimpressed expression coming across perfectly even though they weren’t face to face. *“I don’t want you having the excuse that Japan needs you or whatever. There’s other heroes and I’m not having you disappear in the middle of whatever we’re dealing with to go off and fight some villain! Hence, the middle of nowhere. Nedzu can send a car for you or whatever if it’s an emergency, but there’s not even cell service out there, so we can have our little chat uninterrupted.”*

Gran Torino had then hung up before Toshinori could protest further, leaving him no choice but to show up and trap himself off the grid with his mentor. When the front porch of the cabin came into view, Gran was already waiting for him, arms crossed as he leaned against the door frame. A part of Toshinori was glad that there was no possibility of this conversation being interrupted by an emergency.

The other part of him was just very afraid.

Back to School

Chapter Summary

Izuku returns to UA, this time with dorms!

It was weird living somewhere that wasn't his room. Well, actually Izuku supposed that the dorm *was* technically his room, but at the same time, it didn't feel like his yet. At least when he'd been on internships, he'd known he was a guest, but now this was supposed to be his new home for the next few years. It didn't feel real yet.

At least he hadn't had to deal with the crazy reporters who were still camping outside the gates. Thankfully, Nedzu had suggested that him and the other students involved in the Hosu incident arrive in the early morning to avoid the worst of the mob, and even then, the press was being held back by a police line to protect the students. Izuku knew that he'd probably have to give an interview or something eventually, especially with how a video detailing Stain's ideology was currently going viral right alongside the video of his takedown, but Izuku was more than happy to let Nedzu handle the press interactions for as long as possible. At the very least, it gave him time to come up with a good strategy to deal with the publicity the same way he strategized to deal with villains, right?

Izuku sighed and re-tied his tie for the third time. Between Nedzu and Eraser, he now theoretically knew the steps he was supposed to take to get the knot to look somewhat normal, but it was still going to take a lot of practice to break whatever weird habits he'd acquired when trying to learn on his own. In the end, the knot was still a little too big and lumpy, but the tie had ended up the correct length and the front was longer than the back, so he was going to count that as a win.

The kitchen was slightly chaotic when he arrived, though Izuku didn't know what else he expected from twenty teenagers all being thrown into the same house together.

"It's literally the same thing as a toaster!" Kaminari insisted.

"Isn't that dangerous?" Yaomomo asked, looking at the still-untoasted bread in concern. "It would really be much better to use a toaster rather than trying to use your quirk…"

The stalemate was broken when Todoroki reached past her to grab a

slice of bread with his left hand and toasted it perfectly, maintaining eye contact with her the whole time. Izuku tried to hide his snickers at the exasperated look on Yomomo's face as Todoroki, still maintaining eye contact, took a bite from his freshly toasted bread without even bothering to butter it first before turning to Kaminari, "I agree, the handprint is kind of annoying. Use a toaster Kaminari."

Was this how things were going to be from now on?

It was difficult to be late for class when it was only a five minute walk. That, of course, meant that Iida's empty desk felt all the more conspicuous when the bell rang.

"Alright class, settle down." Aizawa said boredly. "I know you're all sick of each other by now, but you're going to have to get used to living in the dorms, so let's get…"

"Um, Aizawa-sensei?" Uraraka raised her hand hesitantly. "I'm sorry to interrupt, but do you know where Iida is?"

"Iida has been suspended." Aizawa responded matter-of-factly. When the class tried to explode into shocked muttering, he activated his quirk and glared at them all until they were shifting uncomfortably, but silently, in their seats. "Do we need to review the lesson on hero licences and vigilantism? While Nedzu did end up giving your classmates emergency permission to fight in Hosu, the fact remains that Iida originally sought out the hero killer and we need to be sure that he will not repeat such behavior in the future before he will be allowed to return to class. Do I make myself clear?"

The class nodded solemnly and Izuku couldn't help the feeling that Iida was lucky to have been given the option to return at all. It was probably at least partially because he only went off the deep end in response to his brother's injury, which made him sympathetic, and the rest was probably because the whole media situation was already a fiasco without adding an expulsion to the list, but Izuku hoped that Iida would be able to get his act together eventually, if only for the people he would eventually save.

Aizawa sighed loudly, "Let this be a warning to you. Your quirks and your training are valuable tools, but they are also weapons and cannot be used for personal gain *or revenge* without consequences. Keep that in mind moving forward and you'll be better off than half the heroes out there. Now, let's review the laws surrounding quirk use."

When Izuku arrived for his lesson with Nedzu, the principal had ten different newspapers spread across his desk and at least two broadcasts streaming, but he still smiled and got up to pour them both some tea as Izuku sat down.

“So...It looks like we were right about the hero killer.” Izuku said, taking the cup that Nedzu offered him.

“Unfortunately.” Nedzu’s expression twisted into an unhappy scowl. “And it appears that the media has taken the nomu attack as more than a mere coincidence, so those galvanized to action by the hero killer’s ideology will most likely flock to the league of villains.”

“Wonderful.” Izuku said dryly. “This is why you said it’s better to discredit popular villains before…”

“Don’t be silly, Midoriya.” Nedzu chirped. “If we had not captured him when we had, both Iida and Native would be dead. And it is only *due* to his capture that he gained his popularity. So, overall, this may not be an ideal situation, but that just means it is more of a challenge, correct?”

Nedzu’s eyes sparkled with contagious excitement and Izuku couldn’t help but respond with a determined nod, “Yes sir!”

“Good!” Nedzu smiled and took a sip of his tea. “So, how should we begin?”

“Hmm…” Izuku let his mind turn over a few possibilities. “Well, the main issue is that, objectively, Stain was right. The hero system does need to be reformed and there are too many heroes that are only in it for the fame or the money, rather than to save people…”

“Is that an issue?” Nedzu asked.

Izuku looked at him incredulously, “Yes? How are we supposed to discredit someone who is right?”

“Oh, there are ways.” Nedzu replied. “We could always try to convince the people of a comfortable lie the way the hero commission tends to do, somehow I don’t think you’ll choose that option, or we could try praising his ideals while simultaneously condemning his actions.”

“I think that last one wouldn’t be well received.” Izuku brought up. “Wouldn’t that run the risk of being seen as too little too late,

especially when Stain was so action based? That's what often happens in the debate about violent protests, right?"

"So…?" Nedzu prompted.

"So we need some other action to channel people towards that isn't murder." Izuku brushed aside one of the newspapers so he had a place to set down his cup. "Maybe we could bring up how Stain's murders didn't actually spread his ideology. It was the attack with the fewest injuries that did that."

"Exactly." Nedzu smiled and took another sip of tea. "Most of his victims became martyrs of the hero community, rather than being discredited like Stain had hoped."

Izuku grinned, "We can use Stain's popularity to reform the hero system. Talk about how murders make martyrs and push for change within the system. We can even use Endeavor to help and redirect people's focus to finding and eradicating villains within the system, rather than becoming villains themselves."

"It's a decent start." Nedzu began. "Although there are some concerns we'll need to manage…"

Their conversation was interrupted by a harsh ring that echoed through the office and Izuku was certain that if he was still holding his tea, he would have spilled it all over the papers on Nedzu's desk. No one ever called during their lessons. Was it an emergency?

Nedzu frowned and checked his phone, "Why would Aizawa be calling at this hour? He's assisting Snipe in teaching the third years, I believe they were doing a combat exercise today…"

He answered the call on speaker, chirping cheerily, "Aizawa! What a wonderful surprise!"

"We're under attack!" Aizawa's voice echoed over the receiver. "I can't see the villain, so can't erase their quirk and they're trying to capture one of the students! I've never seen this quirk before. It acts just like my capture weapon, so I can't get a hold of it and Snipe can't shoot without hitting Toogata! I need back up!"

One for All

Chapter Summary

Secrets.

Chapter Notes

Art!
Dabi Best Bro

Memes!
X

Izuku and Nedzu both froze. An attack this soon after the Hosu incident? And right after they had switched to dorms as well? Even outside of the risk to the students' safety, which was obviously the most important consideration, the PR nightmare this could cause was terrifying. Nedzu didn't waste any time pulling up the security feed for the third year's practice gym and Izuku quickly stood and came around the desk so he could peer at the screen over the principal's shoulder.

The scene on the screen was absolute chaos. The students were panicking and Izuku was eerily reminded of the sludge villain incident. Just like then, the heroes present weren't a good match for whatever was going on and couldn't do much except keep an eye on the writhing mess of black tendrils that was exploding from Mirio in every direction.

Wait... *from?*

It took a second for Izuku's brain to catch up and figure out what was going on, but once it did, he was torn between giggling in relief and hitting his head against the wall, so he settled for a third option: a tired sigh that could put one of Eraser's to shame. Why couldn't All Might or Mirio have at least *warned* the other teachers that he might develop other powers?

"Eraser, we're not being attacked." Izuku said calmly. "Mirio should know what's going on, just erase his quirk and ask him if you're so concerned."

“Toogata *does not* know what’s going on!” Eraser growled. “Who do you think is screaming and trying to fight back?!”

“What?” Izuku froze, this time in confusion, not fear. Had...had All Might not told him that the weird transferable quirk was a *stockpiler?* According to the research he’d done when he’d first tried helping Mirio with his “quirk mutation” the quirk got stronger each time it was passed from mentor to student, which meant that it was collecting each holder’s strengths, which logically included their quirks. This, of course, brought up the question of why All Might never *used* those quirks despite the obvious advantage those powers would give him in a fight, but Izuku had given up trying to make sense of anything that man did.

Case in point, why he hadn’t warned his protege that he might develop other quirks? Izuku rubbed the bridge of his nose in frustration and grumbled under his breath, “Just when I think that idiot can’t do anything worse, he goes and outdoes himself. Ok, Eraser, new plan. Erase Mirio’s quirk and send him straight to me.”

“I know you’re not stupid, Deku,” Eraser was using his *I can’t beleive I have to expalin something so simple* voice, “but I’m not about to erase a student’s quirk when it’s the *only thing he can use to fight back against the mysterious villain attacking him!”*

“That *is* his quirk.” Izuku groaned. It should not be his job to explain this. “It’s a part of the mutation that...ugh, just...do you trust me?”

“Usually.” Eraser responded dryly.

“Then do what I say.” Izuku ordered firmly. “Erase his quirk and send him straight to me.”

“If you’re wrong…”

“Then I’m already grounded, so it’s not a big deal.” Izuku interrupted.

“Problem child…”

Izuku ignored the warning tone in Eraser’s voice as he grabbed Nedzu’s phone and hung up. Aizawa would probably swear, but at least he would acknowledge that it was useless to continue the argument. Looking back to the camera footage, Izuku sighed in relief as the black tendrils disappeared and Mirio fell to the floor, visibly shaken up, but otherwise ok. Eraserhead deactivated in quirk and Izuku held his breath, waiting for Mirio’s new quirk to start acting up

again, but thankfully whatever had triggered it had apparently passed and it didn't manifest again as Mirio's friends ran up to him and started hugging him.

Izuku sighed and dragged a hand down his face before finally glancing over at Nedzu, "You know exactly what's going on, don't you?"

"Ah, Midoriya, what kind of hyper-intelligent principal would I be if I didn't?" Nedzu smiled. "Although I *am* pleasantly surprised that you figured it out as well. That's assuming, of course, that you weren't told."

"As if All Might would ever respect me enough to tell me anything. " Izuku muttered bitterly. "I only figured it out because Mirio asked for help controlling his quirk before the school year started. Obviously, things didn't add up, but after I realized the *mutations,* " he emphasized the excuse with finger quotes, "only occurred in a specific line of mentors and students, the rest wasn't hard to figure out."

Nedzu grinned mischievously, "You'd be surprised, Midoriya. It's kept many of lesser intelligence fooled for generations. Most people never think to look, and would of course dismiss such a quirk as impossible if they ever caught a whiff of it. It takes an open mind to figure out such a secret."

Izuku blushed slightly. Even now, it was hard to take compliments like that into stride, even though he should be used to people actually respecting his abilities. So, he just avoided the subject entirely.

"Speaking of lesser intelligence," Izuku groaned and he knew that he was probably acting way too much like Eraser right now, but he was *tired,* "can you get All Might over here? He should really be the one to explain this to Mirio, you know? Considering that it's his fault and everything."

To his surprise, that was what got a slight frown, "Well, this *is* an interesting predicament."

Izuku glared at him suspiciously, "What?"

"Well, All Might requested a few days off and is currently off the grid with an old mentor of his." Nedzu shot him a small smile, almost like he thought the whole thing was funny. "So I suppose it's up to us to explain it then! Won't this be fun?"

Izuku was about to open his mouth and argue that no, this wasn't

going to be fun and that it wasn't his job to explain anything to do with a top secret quirk that he wasn't even supposed to know about in the first place, but he was interrupted by the door to Nedzu's office slamming open. Aizawa strode in, followed quickly by Mirio, who was looking more timid and scared than Izuku had ever seen him, which was what finally pulled Izuku out of his frustration. Yes, All Might was an idiot, and no, it wasn't Izuku's job to explain Mirio's new quirk to him, but he'd be damned if he was going to let someone else suffer because they didn't understand their quirk, not when he could help them!

Aizawa activated his quirk and glared both Izuku and Nedzu, neither of which gave an inch to his intimidation, "Explain. Now."

Izuku glanced hesitantly between Nedzu and Mirio, who was looking at Aizawa with barely concealed panic, and sighed. Aizawa obviously didn't know that All Might's quirk was transferable. From what Izuku had gathered, the number one hero hadn't told hardly anyone, even his successor's teachers who really should have known, but...it wasn't his secret to tell.

"Eraser…" Izuku started slowly, but Aizawa quickly cut him off.

"No." He looked between all three of them and reactivated his quirk. "I don't know what's going on or what the three of you are trying to hide, but it stops here. Got it?"

Izuku swallowed and looked at Mirio, who smiled awkwardly and shrugged, "Uh, I don't really know what's going on either, so…"

Izuku sighed again and looked at Nedzu, who was just grinning and waiting to see what he did, which was no help at all. He rubbed the bridge of his nose in frustration. It wasn't his secret to tell, but it *would* make sense for Aizawa to know and All Might obviously wasn't ever going to tell him, so…

He turned to Mirio, "We are going to be discussing the *specifics of your quirk."* He said heavily, hoping that Mirio would be able to understand his double meaning just from his eyes. Considering that he paled slightly, Izuku had succeeded. "Are you ok with Aizawa…"

"I'm staying." Aizawa said firmly.

"With all due respect, Eraser, that's not.." Izuku countered.

"I"m the kid's teacher, Deku." Aizawa glared at him intensely, "So I

have a right and a *responsibility* to know what's going on, so anyone care to explain?"

Izuku was prepared for a staring contest, even though he knew he would probably lose in the end, considering this was *Eraserhead,* but thankfully Nedzu cut them off before their battle of wills could even really begin.

"Young Toogata is beginning to develop other quirks!" Nedzu chirped cheerfully.

"What?!?!" Mirio yelled in shock at the same time that Aizawa gave them both a deadpan glare.

"Quirks mutating, I understand." Aizawa said. "But dual quirks are rare…"

"And hardly ever occur naturally, yes, I know." Izuku held up a hand to keep Aizawa quiet as he turned to Mirio again. He looked at Nedzu for confirmation and when the principal nodded, just accepted it. If All Might wanted it to remain a secret, then he should have been here. It might not be Izuku's secret to share, but on the other hand, it also wasn't Izuku's responsibility to hide it. "What all has All Might told you about the past holders of your quirk?"

Mirio froze and Izuku recognized the panic welling up again as he glanced at Aizawa and gave a last ditch effort to laugh off the question, "Past holders? I, uh, I don't know what you're talking…"

Izuku cut him off with a look, "Nedzu already knows, I figured it out months ago, and Aizawa apparently isn't going to leave. We're all here to help you, but we can't do that if you don't let us."

Mirio stayed still for a moment before laughing awkwardly and rubbing the back of his neck, "Heh, well, I uh, I thought we were doing a pretty good job hiding it, but, uh, apparently not, so...I mean, All Might told me that I'm...I think the ninth? But, uh, I don't think he's told me anything about any of the others. He, uh, doesn't like to talk about the mentor he got One for All from, so…" He smiled sheepishly and shrugged.

"One for All?" Izuku asked.

"Oh," Mirio's eyes widened, "I thought you said you figured it out…"

"I literally just traced the quirk from student to teacher for nine

generations and figured out it was transferable." Izuku deadpanned. "No one ever wrote down what it was called."

"I guess that makes sense." Mirio laughed. "But yeah, he didn't really tell me…"

"Are you saying that All Might *gave you his quirk?* " Aizwa looked halfway between a blue screen and unholy rage, which Izuku found unreasonably amusing considering that that had been his exact reaction to finding out as well. "Setting aside the fact that that's even possible, what does that oaf think he's…"

"There will be time for fighting the number one hero later, Aizawa." Nedzu said with amusement. "But I believe the purpose of this conversation was to help Toogata understand his little...incident earlier, not to destroy a national symbol."

Aizawa exhaled deeply through his nose and rubbed his eyes, "Fine. Deku, continue."

Izuku nudged Nedzu gently so he could access the keyboard, "Well, from what I understand, All Might's quirk is a stockpiler. It takes a little bit of each holder and passes it on to the next, right?"

"Yeah, that's pretty much what he told me." Mirio shrugged.

"Good." Izuku swivled the computer screen so that Aizawa and Mirio could both see it. "Mirio, meet one of your predecessors. The pro hero Lariat, also known as Daigoro Banjo and the fifth holder of One for All."

Safety

Chapter Summary

All Might has his chat with Gran Torino.

Chapter Notes

This fic got reccomended on Tiktok! It makes me super happy!

Also, sorry for getting philosophical on main.

Toshinori awkwardly coughed into his handkerchief as Gran poured them both coffee. Maybe he should have put his will in order before coming? Honestly, it probably wasn't a bad idea to have a will ready anyway with the way his health was going. He really wished that visits with his old mentor could be a little less terrifying, but even being in the man's presence brought back all the feelings of inadequacy he'd felt when he was still trying to prove to Nana and Gran that he really did deserve One for All. The reason for the current visit also didn't help.

"Oh, stop shaking Toshinsori." Gran snapped. "I'm not gonna beat up some guy that's already got two feet in the grave, so stop freaking out so we can talk already."

Toshinsori chuckled wryly, "Not even just one foot in the grave, Gran? Two?"

"With the way *you* live, you should be grateful any of you is still out of the grave at all." Gran complained good-naturedly. "You're reckless, kiddo."

"So I've been told." Toshinori fiddled with the handkerchief in his hands. "But that's not what I'm here to talk to you about."

"No, it's not." Gran set down his coffee mug and heaved a heavy sigh, "You're here to talk about Deku."

Toshinori nodded sheepishly, "I...well, I guess I thought I knew how the world works, but…"

"But Deku keeps proving you wrong." Gran finished.

Toshinori shrugged. It wasn't necessarily just that young Midoriya

kept proving him wrong, it was that literally everyone else seemed to be willing to give him a chance and from the very beginning, Toshininori just...couldn't. He didn't know how to describe it, but…

"Isn't it my duty as a hero to keep people safe?"

Gran took a long sip of his coffee and stared out the window thoughtfully, "Hmmm, I suppose that comes down to the price of safety, doesn't it?"

"What do you mean the price of safety?" Toshinori gestured to his missing stomach. "Because if this is what you mean, I think I've already paid it."

Gran chucked, "I guess in some way you have, haven't you? But that's not what I mean, kid. You studied abroad in America, didn't you? What did they teach you about the Patriot Act?"

Toshinori thought for a moment. His study abroad had been a long time ago and he would be the first to admit that he had paid more attention to the local villains than he had the classes, with the exception of geography of course. He had had to learn the names of all fifty states, after all. But the Patriot Act sounded familiar.

"Wasn't that a pre-quirk law?" He asked finally. "Something about international security? I didn't think it was still on the books anymore."

Gran sighed, "Even if the law itself was overturned, the effects are still being felt hundreds of years later. And yes, it was about security, specifically keeping America safe from potential terrorists. The details aren't important, but the point is that the Patriot Act offered safety, but at the cost of the privacy of the people it was supposed to be keeping safe. Can you see why there was public outcry once the country realized exactly what was happening?"

"Not really…" Toshinori said slowly. "Wasn't the extra safety worth it? America was just trying to become the world's own symbol of peace, right?"

"And *that's* why we're having an issue." Gran said tiredly. "Kid, sometimes staying safe comes at the cost of living in a bubble. Sometimes it comes at the cost of having your own choices stomped on by everyone you meet. And sometimes...well, sometimes safety can come at the cost of happiness. Does that make any sense at all to you?"

Something about what Gran was saying tickled at the back of Toshinori's mind, but he still felt like there was some grand punchline that Gran was trying to get at and he was somehow still missing it. The feeling was frustratingly familiar from his time as a student, but at least now his failures weren't being punctuated by kicks to the gut.

He supposed that was the perk of only having half a stomach.

"Gran…" Toshinori stared his mentor straight in the eyes, "I have given up so much to keep the people of Japan safe. To keep people like Deku safe. To be the protector that I needed as a young boy. I've used One for All to become a symbol of peace, even though that meant giving up my health, my time, and even my identity so that I could be what the people needed. I just...I don't understand how the price of safety could ever be too high."

"And maybe that's what the problem is." Gran groaned and dragged a hand down his face. "You've never known the meaning of restraint Toshinori. For you it's always plus ultra or nothing. Maybe that's why One for All suits you so well, I don't know, but kid...look where that mentality has gotten you. I *know* Nighteye's called you out on your self-destructive habits before. I sure as hell have and probably Recovery Girl and Eraserhead have too. Heck, even *Nedzu* has given you an earful a time or two, so I know you can't deny it's a problem."

Gran looked at him sharply and Toshinori resisted the urge to squirm in his seat like a middle schooler getting scolded, "You don't ever hold back, kid. You go at your goals with everything, which is part of what makes you a great hero, but it's also what's gotten you to the point where you have to carry around that goddamn handkerchief everyday. For you, no price is too high to pay, so you can't get it through your thick head that other people have limits, Toshinori! Other people look at an unwinnable fight and would rather escape with their lives! Other people lose half their internal organs and retire instead of pushing themselves to ruin!"

Toshinori shrunk back in his seat and Gran paused as he realized that he had stood up at some point and was now yelling at the number one hero, not that he probably cared about rank. He sighed and dropped back down into his chair, "Other people would rather live life on their own terms than be protected, Toshinori. Deku's *safety,* the way you see it, would come at a cost of his happiness and his ability to control his own life. Can you at least see why that price might be more than he's willing to pay?"

“So let me get this straight.” Aizawa said slowly. “All Might knowingly gave a teenager, *a student,* a quirk that not only comes with an as yet unknown quantity of power, but also an insane number of extra quirks *and* a possibly immortal nemesis hellbent on destroying him. Did I leave anything out?”

“In his defense,” Mirio grinned awkwardly, “I really don’t think he knew about the other quirks.”

“And he fully believed All for One to be dead.” Nedzu added.

“He wouldn’t have if he just thought things through for once in his life.” Aizawa sighed. “That man is the height of irrationality.”

Izuku nodded in agreement.

“Sensei.” Kurogiri’s voice appeared to his left. “You have visitors.”

“Perfect.” All for One used one of his telekinesis quirks to turn off the television and straightened up to look more intimidating, not that he needed much help, what with being quite literally a faceless villain, but still. “Bring them here.”

There was a slight whoosh of air as Kurogiri used Warp Gate and then a low whistle, “Woah, these are some nice digs ya got here! All this equipment must’ve cost a pretty penny, but that’s probably chump change for the symbol of evil, isn’t it.”

“Giran.” All for One kept a professional air and was almost grateful All Might had blinded him so that he didn’t have to see Giran’s stupid smirk. He knew he was wearing one, men like him always did. One would think that brokers were easy to manipulate because they would do anything for a price, but the truth was the opposite. Men like Giran were always much more comfortable doing the manipulating, which meant that although doing business with them was necessary, All for One preferred not to draw it out. “I assume the other person with you is the man I asked you to find.”

There was a small squeak from their other guest, “Yessir! Um, I was told that you wanted me to, uh, identify someone for you? It’s sometimes hard because I just see a face, and sometimes it takes a little to track down who that face belongs to, but uh…” the man chuckled nervously, “I’ve, uh, heard you don’t like being disappointed, so uh, I’ll do my best!”

All for One smiled, something that he knew was both comforting and intimidating at the same time, and held out his hand. The man took it with only slight hesitation, a sure sign that he didn't know exactly who he was dealing with. Excellent.

Any other quirk, All for One would have been tempted to steal at that moment. Actually, he *was* tempted to steal it. He could feel the quirk humming just below the man's skin, practically begging to be taken a put to better use than this snivelling sycophant could ever manage, but All one one simply shook the man's hand firmly and let go.

It would be counterintuitive for a blind man to steal a quirk that required eyesight.

"I have an article I'd like you to read." All for One said simply. He gestured to Kurogiri, who held out a tablet that would already have one of the anonymous poster's more popular articles displayed on the screen. "I would like to know who wrote it."

The man laughed nervously as he took the tablet, "Well, like I said, I'll try, but I haven't seen every face, so…"

The man gulped as All for One let a tad of his intimidating aura seep into the air. He was done with words, it was time for action. And, on the off chance that the man was unable to identify who he needed, it would be simple to give his quirk to someone who *could.*

The man read silently, thankfully, for a few minutes before he chuckled again, time time sounding relieved instead of anxious, "Here I was, all worried for nothing. Turns out, your guy's actually pretty popular. His face has been in the news a lot lately, so uh, if I can just look up his name…"

"Who is he?" All for One demanded impatiently.

"Oh, it's that quirkless kid from the sports festival." The man said dismissively. "The one who fought Stain? Uh, Deku, I think his name was…Ah yes, here it is...Izuku Midoriya!"

The man paused and swallowed, his nerves back in full force as All for One's rage almost tangibly enveloped the room, "Um...did I say something wrong?"

Call Out

Chapter Summary

I just enjoy calling Iida out on, you know, attempted murder.

Chapter Notes

Art!
Selenicum
KatChicken

Memes!
X X X X

As soon as Hound Dog opened the door, Tenya dropped into a low bow, “I cannot apologize enough for my actions and I am prepared to make whatever resitutions you and Principal Nedzu deem necessary! I am sorry!”

There was a long moment of silence that made Tenya hesitantly glance up and he was met with Hound Dog looking at him skeptically, “An apology isn’t nearly enough to make up for attempted murder, kid.”

Tenya cleared his throat and straightened up, tugging at the bottom of his jacket as Hound Dog turned away from him and walked back into his office. Tenya hesitated in the doorway until Hound Dog sat down at his desk, which he took as an invitation to close the door behind him and sit down on the couch that was pushed against the wall. Hound Dog didn’t even look at him for a full minute, which Tenya thought was very impolite, but correcting people had gotten him into more trouble recently than seemed optimal, so he stayed silent. He was supposed to say *something* though, right?

Tenya was just openeing his mouth to apologize again when Hound Dog turned to him with a heavy sigh, “Of all the students that could have gone straight off the deep end and planned murder, I don’t know whether to be suprised that it was you or not.”

Tenya leaned back slightly in his shock, “Um...what?”

Hound Dog sighed again, “I don’t know whether or not to be surprised. On the one hand, from all accounts, you’re a perfect

student. Studious, rule abiding, quick to accept criticism. Basically a teacher's perfect dream."

"Thank you?" Tenya wasn't sure where this was going. Wasn't this mandatory visit with Hound Dog to make sure he knew that going after the hero killer was wrong and that he wasn't going to do it again? Shouldn't Hound Dog be scolding him instead of praising him?

"I wasn't finished." Hound Dog said dryly. "Like I said, on the one hand you seem like the perfect student, but on the other...you're rigid."

Tenya sat up ramrod straight. He knew he could come across that way, of course. His brother had said it enough times to make him familiar with the term, not to mention his classmates.

"With all due respect, Hound Dog," Tenya straightened his glasses. "I am struggling to understand how that is a bad thing...or even how it relates to the subject of this meeting."

"And *that,* Iida, is at least partially why we're here." Hound Dog shook his head tiredly and grabbed a strand of liquorice from a candy bowl on his desk. "Tell me, what happens when you try to bend a piece of liquorice?"

"It bends?" Tenya answered hesitantly. "Again, I mean no disrespect, but what does this have to do with…"

"And a candy cane?" Hound Dog didn't let him finish, instead fishing out a candy cane from the same bowl and holding it in front of him to illustrate whatever point he was trying to make. "If you try to bend that in half, does it bend or break?"

Tenya was fairly certain this was a trick question somehow, like one of Aizawa sensei's logical ruses, but he wasn't quite sure what the correct response was supposed to be, so the only option left was to answer honestly, "It breaks, sir?"

"Exactly." Hound Dog grinned. "Because it's rigid. So, Iida, in this example, you're basically a candy cane."

Tenya was taken aback and spluttered, "E-excuse me?"

Hound Dog laughed, "Don't worry! It's not supposed to make perfect sense. It's just a silly example that's meant to show how different people deal with stress. Some people, when they encounter something

stressful, are able to bend with the stressor and bounce back, more or less no worse for wear, kind of like liquorice can. But some people, when they encounter a large stressor, say...their brother getting targeted by a serial killer, for example, don't have a flexible enough enough worldview to be able to bend with that stressor. So instead…"

Hound Dog snapped the candy cane in half and Tenya gulped, "That's...a bit of a violent example."

Was he trying to drive home that Tenya had almost died? Because the bandages still on his arms were already doing a good job of that.

"Yeah, it kinda is." Hound Dog agreed. "But that's the point, isn't it? Tenya, as much as I hate to say it, I'm not really surprised that it was you that went from zero to a hundred like you did, and not just because you have an engine quirk. I wouldn't wish what happened to your brother on anyone, but the fact is that when your brother was attacked, you had a choice. You could have accepted it. You could have been angry. You could have thrown yourself into heroism. But at the end of the day, you hadn't developed the flexibility to do any of that. You were too rigid and so what Stain did...it shattered you. In order to get you to where you *need* to be to reenter the hero course, we're going to need to do some work to see *why* you never developed the emotional flexibility to deal with stressors like this and help you learn, for lack of a better way to put it, to bend like a piece of liquorice."

"I…" Tenya was still a little lost, but that was his problem to deal with. "I'll do my best!"

Hound Dog shook his head fondly, "I'm sure you will. You always go things full throttle...which is also something that we need to address. Have you ever heard of black or white thinking?"

"Yes?" Again, Tenya wasn't quite sure if this was a trick question or not. Wasn't giving things his all a good thing? "I believe I've heard it mentioned in passing before."

"Well, black and white thinking is when you see something as all or nothing." Hound Dog explained. "Things are either all good or all bad. There is no in between. It's called a logical fallacy because when you think like this, your brain is lying to you. The real world works in shades of grey."

"Do you mean to imply that *I* have this…" Tenya hesitated, " *logical fallacy?"*

“Pretty much.” Hound Dog shrugged. “Iida, what your little stint with vigilantism demonstrates is that you see the world in shades of black and white. It’s part of why your worldview shattered when you were confronted with a substantial enough stressor. With this thought process, if a student has their feet on the desk, that’s bad, disrespectful and a million other things, but basically, your brain flips that switch and sees it as *evil.* But if someone is following the rules, then they’re *good.* Does that make sense?”

“Yes…” Tenya nodded slowly. “I suppose it does. But, sir, things *are* good or bad! Are you telling me that students putting their feet on the desk is a *good* thing?”

“I’m saying it could go either way.” Hound Dog shrugged. “That student *could* be being disrespectful, or they could simply find having their feet on the desk to be more comfortable than sitting normally. They could even have some injury that means that they *need* to elevate their feet. There’s no way to know. It’s a grey area.”

“I…” Tenya nodded resolutely. “I see what you mean.”

“But do you really?” Hound Dog asked. “Or are you just agreeing with me because I’m an authority figure and therefore *good?”*

Tenya opened his mouth to answer, but stopped before the words could even leave his throat. He owed it to Hound Dog and everyone to at least think about his answer, right? His gut instinct was that he should agree with Hound Dog. He was a teacher and a counselor, so he obviously knew more than Tenya did, but...did he really agree that there were some things that existed in shades of grey?

“You don’t have to answer right now.” Hound Dog said kindly, pulling him from his thoughts. “But I want you to think about it ok?”

Tenya nodded. It was...it was a lot to think about.

“What if…” he started slowly. “What if I can, logically, admit that it makes sense for grey shades to exist naturally, but I’m not sure if they should? For example, I’m not sure I’m comfortable in allowing something to stay grey and having that be fine indefinitely, if that makes sense.”

Hound Dog grinned, “Well then, I’d say we’re starting to make progress.”

“So…” Kirishima jogged to keep up with Katsuki, who *did not* slow down to let him catch up. “Kinda crazy to have finals so soon after, like, moving our entire lives, right? Are you sure you’re alright to help me study?”

Katsuki scoffed, “As if I’d let you fail with the rest of those extras, Shitty Hair.”

“Hey! They’re not going to fail!” Kirishima laughed. “You have to be at least a little smart to even get into UA you know? You gotta have both brains and brawn!”

“Yeah, well then how did you get in?” Katsuki smirked. “Because it obviously wasn’t your intelligence, hair-for-for brains!”

Kirishima gasped and held a hand dramatically to his chest, “Why Bakubro! Are you calling me hot? Cause it sounds like you think I’m pretty strong and manly!”

“What?” Katsuki spluttered and shoved Kirishima away. “No way! I’m calling you stupid, dumbass!”

Not that he was unattractive, obviously, but that wasn’t anything subjective. Anyone with eyes could see that Kirishima was strong, and the way he fought was pretty impressive too. Not that it made him any less of an idiot.

“Of course!” Kirisima winked. “But you’re gonna help me with that one, right? On our study date?”

“It’s not a date, you idiot!”

Issues

Chapter Summary

Our characters keep on learning!

Chapter Notes

Art!
Bitten by a star
Haruuu
Crow
Fandomkitty8
The.name.is.hey
Bee Boy

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Alright, so our next course of action should be unlocking the other quirks within One for All.” Izuku had a fresh notebook in front of him and already had a rough schedule outlined for the rest of the semester, now that Mirio’s training had to fundamentally change.

“Um, wouldn’t it be better to take them one at a time?” Miro laughed nervously. “I could focus on mastering Black Whip first and then…”

“You’re already a third year, Mirio.” Izuku leveled him with a deadpan glare, “Let’s put it this way, would you rather manifest these quirks in the middle of a training exercise or in the middle of a real villain fight where Eraser isn’t there to help you get them under control?”

There was a long moment of silence as Mirio shifted in his seat. Nedzu smiled proudly beside him and Eraser just looked done. Izuku sighed and tapped the page a few times with his pencil, “The only question is how to do that. I never saw a quirk councilor growing up, for obvious reasons, so I’m not really sure what’s normally recommended, but there must be some tools that have been developed to help deepen your connection to your quirk, right?”

“Meditation would be a good start.” Eraser piped up. “And practice, obviously. The longer you spend using your quirk, the more you’ll

become used to using it and the more you'll discover about it. That's why we place such an intense focus on practical training here at UA."

"Alright!" Mirio smiled, a little more confidently now. "So just use my quirk as much as I can and use meditation to deepen my connection to it?"

Nedzu nodded, "That sounds like a good first step, although I would recommend studying the quirks of the past holders as well, so that you can be prepared if and when they manifest!"

"I'll make you a packet." Izuku offered. "I've already done most of the research, so it shouldn't be a big deal to compile it into a usable format. I'll try to give you a few suggestions on use as well, if I have time."

"Great!" Mirio grinned. "You really are a lifesaver, Deku! I really don't know where I'd be with One for All if you weren't willing to help me out. Is there anything else I need to know?"

"Not that I can think of." Izuku said slowly. "Unless...All Might's already told you about All for One, right?"

Mirio cocked his head, "Who?"

"Wonderful." Izuku grumbled. "Just peachy."

"So, you're saying that part of the reason I've been having such a difficult time accepting young Midoriya is that I'm projecting onto him?"

"Pretty much." Gran Torino stole another Takoyaki from the plate at the center of the table. "Don't even try to deny that you can't look at him without thinking of what you were like at that age."

"I was weak." Toshinori answered honestly. "I couldn't have been a hero without Nana's help."

"Yeah, you were a string bean, weren't you?" Gran laughed loudly. "And probably everyone told you that you were weak too, so it makes sense you'd try to see Deku the same way. If you don't prove me wrong, I'm gonna be tempted to think that the reason you're having such trouble with Deku being a hero is because of your own fragile ego!"

Toshinori spat up a mouthful of blood, “What?! I… I’m the symbol of peace! I don’t have a fragile ego!”

“Oh really?” Gran raised an eyebrow skeptically. “So you’re not insecure about what it says about you if Deku succeeds where you failed and becomes the first quirkless hero?”

Katsuki had finally managed to ditch his group of peppy extras just in time for his therapy appointment. Maybe eventually he’d be strong enough that he wouldn’t have to go to these stupid appointments anymore, not that they were nearly as bad as he thought they’d be when Nedzu and Aizawa had told him that he’d be forced to go to them. If anything, they were even a tiny bit helpful, maybe even enjoyable, not that he’d ever tell the mutt that.

Or anyone else for that matter. It was getting more and more awkward to ditch Kirishima and the others, but they’d be the ones to ditch him if they knew he had to go to therapy. Even beyond what he’d done to land there, he couldn’t...he didn’t want them to think he was weak. Especially Kirishima.

Katsuki wasn’t quite sure why Kirishima’s opinion was so important to him, but Shitty Hair thought strength and manliness were the pinnacle of awesomeness that everyone should be striving for. He didn’t deserve anything but the best and strongest friends, not former bullies that were so weak they had to go see a therapist every week, but Katsuki was willing to push through it and hide his weakness for now, because some day, he would be the best, and if he was gonna be the best, he needed to be the strongest.

He rounded the last corner, fully planning on barging into Hound Dog’s office like he normally did, but stopped short when he saw someone else just leaving the office, shutting the door quietly behind him. Iida hadn’t seemed to notice him, seemingly lost in thought as he chewed on a piece of liquorice, but Bakugo couldn’t move. He’d never run into anyone else in this hallway before.

He should have just turned on his heel and gotten out of there, though, because it didn’t take long for Four Eyes to glance in his direction and start striding toward him, chopping his hands, “Oh! Bakugo! Are you here for a visit with Hound Dog as well?”

Katsuki almost growled at him to shut up, but Iida didn’t even wait for a response as he kept talking, *loudly,* “I must say, today was only my first visit, but it was very enlightening! I hope to be able to end my

suspension as soon as possible so I can rejoin you in the hero course and become the bright heroes of tomorrow that we are all striving to be! Plus Ultra!"

Katsuki scoffed and shoved past him, "Whatever, Four Eyes, just stay out of my way!"

"Bakugo!" Iida looked like he was about to scold him, but stopped at the last minute. Hmm, maybe his visit had actually done something. "Have a good appointment, then."

"I'll do what I want."

Katsuki glared at him and stalked toward Hound Dog's door as Iida finally, *finally,* left. He stopped in front of the door right as Iida disappeared around the corner and took a deep breath. Of course Iida would have to do therapy as part of his suspension, but whatever. He'd keep his mouth shut, right? And it wasn't like he cared about Four Eyes opinion. It's not like he was Kirishima or something.

Bakugo huffed and slammed open Hound Dog's door, "What's up, Mutt? Did ya miss me?"

"The semester at UA is wrapping up." Sensei's voice cracked slightly as it came through the TV, which was always a sign that he was upset about something. "The dorms make things a bit more difficult, but you should be able to take advantage of whatever summer training camp they plan to bring the heroes to their knees."

"Yes, Sensei." Tomura said quietly. "We'll show those no good heroes who's in control…"

"How have the recruitment efforts been going?" Sensei asked. "Has Stain's capture brought you any fresh blood?"

Tomura shrugged, "Giran's bring a few recruits by in a few days. He's still vetting them, I think, to make sure they have a high enough XP to join our party."

"Very well…" There was a long moment of silence and Tomura almost thought that Sensei had finished the conversation and left, but then there was another crackle of static as the TV started speaking again, "Oh and one more thing, young Tomura."

Tomura looked up at the TV eagerly, "Yes sensei?"

“I’ll leave the plan for the training camp up to you, but if you have a chance to abduct the student known as Deku and bring him here, I’d appreciate it if you did so.”

“What?!” Tomura jumped up from his seat at the bar and almost disintegrated a part of the wood. “That brat?! He almost took my finger!”

“Exactly why it would be best to have him on our side, rather than the heroes.” Sensei pointed out reasonably. “It will be…more difficult than I had hoped to persuade him to join our path, but I have confidence in you Tomura. I would not have chosen you otherwise.”

Tomura swelled a little with pride, but still scratched at his neck in irritation, “I’d rather just kill the quirkless brat.”

Sensei sighed, “If you must. However, a good leader always tries diplomacy first.”

“Fine.” Tomura groaned and sat back down heavily. “I’ll try to recruit him to our party.”

“That’s all I can ask, young Tomura.” Sensei said proudly. “I look forward to seeing what you become.”

Chapter End Notes

> It has been brought to my attention that there is a slight inconsistency between this and chapter 67 in reguards to when during this conversation Mirio learns about All for One. I may go back and fix that eventually, but for now, it does not impact the plot and so I'm probably going to be lazy and leave it because I like both scenes. I apologize!

Idiots

Chapter Summary

What am I gonna do with these dumbasses?

Chapter Notes

Art!
Liceurban
Clair;P

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Ok, so I get the whole you gotta multiply before you add and stuff, but I’m still a little confused about what to do with the parentheses.”

Kirishima’s hair was down today and he was tugging on it with one hand as the other drummed a pencil against the table of the diner. Katsuki had to keep forcing himself to look away so he could concentrate on studying rather than be distracted just because the idiot decided to be lazy on a saturday and not gel up his hair, “You need to do the parentheses first, dumbass, otherwise you’ll get the answer wrong.”

“Like this?” Kirishima’s face scrunched up in concentration as he solved the practice problem and Katsuki had to look down at the paper quickly to avoid getting caught staring when Kirishima glanced up at him as he finished the problem. “Is that right?”

Katsuki mentally went through the problem looking for mistakes, “Exactly like that, now why didn’t you do that the first time?!”

The stupid, distracting idiot smiled brightly and Katsuki’s stomach flopped, something that was becoming more and more common lately. Pikachu and Racoon Eyes insisted it was a crush, but they had to be wrong. Crushes implied that a relationship like that could ever possibly happen and Katsuki wasn’t gonna drag his friend down like that no matter how dumb and distracting he was.

“Aww, don’t be like that!” Krishima’s laugh echoed loudly around the restaurant. “Aren’t you at least gonna give me a reward for solving the

problem right?"

"Are you serious right now?" Katsuki glared at him. "What would I even give you, a french fry?"

"Hmm…" Kirishima tapped his chin thoughtfully. "I was thinking more like a kiss."

Katsuki shoved him and ducked his head as he felt his face heat up. He felt like everyone was staring at them, but maybe that was just because Kirishima was just so loud, "I told you this wasn't a date, idiot."

Kirishima simply laughed again, then stopped, "Oh, man, are you blushing right now?!"

"Maybe I'm just enraged because you're so stupid and keep getting easy problems wrong. You ever thought of that?" Katsuki denied. "You'd better do the next problem right before I explode on you."

"But I got the last problem right." Kirishima pointed out cheekily.

"Shut up, Shitty Hair."

Math was their last subject before they called it a day, but despite what Katsuki said, Kirishima *was* actually improving and would probably do pretty well on their finals next week, which as good because if he had to go to the training camp with only the other idiot extras for company, he was gonna be pissed. He just needed to make sure the idiot passed.

"Bakugo? Kirishima? I didn't know you frequented this establishment!"

The loud voice made both of them turn toward to see Four Eyes striding toward them. As soon as he saw him, Kirishima smiled again and waved Iida over, "Hey man! It feels like it's been forever! We were all super bummed when Aizawa told us you got suspended over the whole Stain thing."

"Yes, well..." Iida pushed his glasses up on his nose. "The punishment is well-deserved and I am already taking steps to be able to rejoin you as soon as possible."

"That's awesome!" Kirishima said supportavely. "What do you have to do before they'll let you back in?"

“I have to write an essay on vigilantism laws and show improvement in therapy.” Iida said. “Oh, yes, Bakugo, I meant to ask, how did your visit with Hound Dog go?”

Katsuki froze.

“I have a to-go order for Iida!” The waitress behind the counter yelled. “Order for Iida!”

“Oh, that’s mine.” Iida said. “Sorry I can’t stay and chat for long. I promised Tensei I’d bring him something that wasn’t hospital food.”

A heavy silence fell between him and Kirishima as Iida hurried to grab his food from the counter and left. Of course, leave it up to Four Eyes to fuck everything up. He’d just kinda assumed there was some sort of silent agreement between them after they’d run into each other to never mention it again, but apparently not. He thought it was just common sense not to talk about who you saw going out of therapy, but either he’d missed something or Iida was an idiot. The second one was a lot more likely and a lot more likely to get a certain someone punched in the face.

Finally, Kirishima broke the silence, “I didn’t know you were seeing Hound Dog. Is that where you’ve been going during the times you don’t hang out with us?”

“Drop it.” Katsuki growled. He wanted to disappear. It was only a matter of time before Kirishima told the other extras he was weak and then they’d stop inviting him to hang out at all. Stupid four eyes. Stupid therapy.

Kirishima shrugged, acting for all the world like he was talking about the weather or something like that, “You could have told us man. We would have stopped pestering you so much to hang out with us.”

Katsuki’s heart sank at the confirmation that Kirishima didn’t want to be friends anymore. Burying his...was this disappointment? Whatever shitty emotion it was, Katsuki buried it under a layer of anger as he started to gather his things.

“Whoa! Dude! Where are you going?” Kirishima looked flustered. “We still haven’t finished studying for math yet!”

“I thought you weren’t interested in hanging out with someone who had to go to fucking therapy.” Katsuki accused, slinging his bag over his shoulder and standing to leave. “Figured I’d save you the trouble

of *pestering me* or some shit."

"What?" Kirishima's eyes widened after a split second and he grabbed Katsuki's wrist before he could take more than a few steps away. "Dude, that's not what I meant at all!"

"Yeah? And what did you mean?" Katsuki turned on him. "I know I don't deserve to be your friend, so just fuck off and stop dragging it out. You can go study with the other extras if you're so concerned about finals."

"Bakugo, wait!" Kirishima stood hurriedly and stood in his way so he couldn't leave, "You've got it all wrong! I'm not gonna stop hanging out with you for something like that! I'd never do that!"

"So what?" Katsuki glared at him. "You're just gonna act like you're not judging me for having to go talk to the mutt every week? Yeah right."

"Is that you think?" Kirishima ran a hand through his stupid, shitty hair. "Bakubro, it's not like that at all. I think that'd be pretty hypocritical of me to judge you anyway, considering I've got a therapist too."

Katsuki blue-screened, "...what?"

Kirishima chuckled, "I've been going to therapy since middle school, so trust me when I say it's super manly. Now can we sit back down? People are starting to stare."

Katsuki huffed and ignored the way his face turned red as he slouched back to their table and slumped down in his seat. Kirishima awkwardly slid into the seat opposite him and there was a long moment of silence before he cleared his throat, "So...?"

"You're literally the walking embodyment of fucking sunshine." Katsuki interrupted. "Why the hell would you ever have to go to therapy? Are you just lying to make me feel better or some shit?"

Kirishima sighed, "I wouldn't do that, man. Besides the fact that lying just isn't manly, I care about you too much for that. Bakugo...I've got depression."

Katsuki did a double take, "But…"

"But I act so happy all the time?" Kirishima shrugged. "A combination

of good coping skills and fake it ‘till you make it. It’s got a lot better, mostly because of therapy and other stuff, but it got pretty bad back in middle school. I didn’t really have…well, I didn’t have friends back then, you know?”

Katsuki looked at him suspiciously, “I thought you went to the same school as Racoon Eyes.”

“I did.” Kirishima nodded. “But we weren’t really *friends* until, like, halfway through our third year. I thought she was cool, sure, but I was too shy to reach out.”

Katuski leveled him with a look, “You? Shy? You really expect me to believe that?”

Kirishima laughed, “You don’t have to believe me, but it’s true! I, uh, kinda had a realization though that I didn’t want to keep going like that and thought, *well, what’s holding me back from changing?* So…I remade myself. My parents were pretty shocked when I came out of the bathroom with bright red hair, I’ll tell you that.”

Katsuki couldn’t help chuckling as he envisioned Kirishima’s parents calling him down to dinner and seeing a completely different kid, “Dying your hair doesn’t count as therapy, dumbass.”

“Maybe not, but have you really been a teenager if you haven’t impulsively dyed your hair in the middle of a mental breakdown?” Kirishima said cheekily. “No, my parents offered to have me start therapy after I told them *why* I dyed my hair, and I haven't looked back since. The whole hair color thing and making a resolution to be bold and cheerful worked well for the first few days, but honestly I probably wouldn’t have been able to keep it up if I hadn’t ever started talking to someone about it. I still have days where my smile is mostly fake, but what you gonna do?”

“I…” Katsuki blinked a few times. “I’m sorry. I didn’t know.”

Kirishima shook his head, “It’s not something I talk about a lot, but going to therapy doesn’t make you weak or a wimp or whatever you’re thinking. That’s one thing my therapist was very clear on from the get-go and she’s pretty much always honest, so…I think you’d probably like her.”

Katsuki couldn’t even imagine any therapist other than Hound Dog, “What’s she like?”

“Oh, Cece’s fun. She’s always brutally honest, because of her quirk so…” Kirishima stopped to think for a moment and grimaced, “Actually, I’m not sure if you’d love her or hate her.”

Katsuki raised an eyebrow, “Why?”

“Well, uh…” Kirishima chuckled awkwardly. “Imagine if Tsu was an alcoholic and that’s pretty much Cece. You two would either get along like a house on fire...or you’d set the house on fire. It’s probably best if we just never find out.”

Bakugo scoffed, “I don’t wanna meet your stupid therapist, Shitty Hair.”

“Just saying!” Kirishima gave him one of those stupid bright smiles and Katsuki felt his stomach flip again. “I’m proud of you. It takes a lot of determination to admit that you need to get better and actually takes steps toward it. I think you’re really strong, Bakubro. It’s one of the things I admire most about you.”

It was then that Katsuki did something impulsive as he reached out and grabbed Kirishima by the front of the shirt. He let out a small squeak and his eyes widened and Katsuki dragged him partway across the table and kissed him before he could think any better of it. Katsuki’s brain kept screaming at him to stop, that he’d regret it and he didn’t deserve it, but like Kirishima had said, could he really say he’d been a teenager if he didn’t do impulsive things once in a while?

After a few seconds, though, Katsuki realized that his brain kinda did have a point and let go of Kirishima like he’d been burned, “I...I’m sorry, I don’t know what came over…”

Before he could probably apologize for randomly kissing his best friend, however, Kirishima smiled and pulled them back together for another kiss, “Don’t you dare apologize, Baku-boyfriend. Totally not manly.”

They were interrupted by their waitress coming over, “Well, I totally owe the cooks money now. I thought for sure the redhead would make the first move.”

Kirishima turned almost as red as his hair, “Uh...what? You were betting on us?!”

“Are you kidding? This is the most entertaining thing that’s happened all day.” She grinned and put a giant milkshake down on the table.

“On the house, congratulations.”

“Well, uh…” Kirishima smiled shyly and rubbed the back of his neck. “We’re not finishing math today, are we?”

Chapter End Notes

Kirishima's therapist in this chapter is an OC that @morallygreyismyfavoritecolor created as part of the UA Staff AU on Tiktok!

Stress

Chapter Notes

Art!
Newb
Coppery Copper
SalmonMeister
Steppy
dreadedthyme

Memes at the end!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Toshinori was in trouble. He could tell just by the way that Aizawa glared at him as he passed by him in the hall on his way to Principal Nedzu's office, but he was the symbol of peace! He refused to shrink back just because Aizawa's glare was terrifying! He also refused to let his knees tremble like some nervous middle schooler as he walked. Sure, it wasn't a *good* sign that he'd come back from Gran Torino's cabin to a voicemail from Nedzu requesting he come see him before resuming classes, but he wasn't a child anymore, he was a teacher and therefore shouldn't be afraid of being called into the principal's office.

Right?

Nedzu opened the door right as he was about to knock, which was as startling as it normally was, but not abnormal behavior for the principal, but something about his smile gave Toshinori chills, "Ah, All Might! Please come in!"

"Of course…" Toshinori stepped inside and closed the door behind him. "Principal Nedzu, sir…"

"Would you like some tea?" Nedzu interrupted, already pouring two cups before Toshinori had a chance to respond. "How was your visit with Gran Torino."

Toshinori sighed and accepted the tea, "It gave me a lot to think about."

That was the honest truth of it, wasn't it? He wanted to protect Deku from the dangers of heroism, but at the end of the day, why was that? Gran might not have been the *nicest* about it, but he'd had a point

when he'd said that Toshinori might simply be projecting onto the poor boy. He was the number one hero! He...if things had happened differently and he had never met Nana, would he have been able to push through like young Midoriya had? Would he have been able to overcome the limitations and obstacles that faced the quirkless not only in an industry that wasn't designed for them, but also in the world at large?

Unfortunately, Toshinori had to admit to himself that no, he would never have been able to do what Deku was doing. It was frightening and humbling to admit, but while he still had doubts that it was even possible, he was having to slowly sort through his feelings and realize that in addition to fear and concern, when he thought of Midoirya actually becoming a quirkless hero, he also felt at least a smidge of jealousy. He didn't exactly know what to do about that.

Toshinori shook his head and took a sip of his tea, "If you don't mind my asking, sir, why did you want to talk to me."

"Ah! Of course!" Nedzu smiled and clapped his paws together. "Deku knows about One for All!"

Toshinsori choked on his tea.

"He figured it out months ago, apparently." Nedzu continued, unfazed. "I'm not surprised, in fact I half-expected it, but it is still quite the accomplishment! There *was* a bit of a situation while you were gone, on account of the fact that young Togata has started to develop the quirks of the past holders, but we made a plan to use moving forward that you'll need to approve, but we don't expect any other surprises, at least in the coming weeks."

"Uh…" Toshinsori had thought his health problems were mostly in his intestines, not his ears, but apparently not. "I'm sorry, could you repeat that."

Nedzu grinned, "Togata manifested the quirk of one of the past holders while you were gone."

"How?!" Toshinori abandoned his tea. There wouldn't be much of a point to drinking it if this conversation was going to keep going the way it had been. "One for All is a *strength* stockpiling quirk! It makes the user stronger and neither Nana nor I ever developed other quirks! She would have told me if something like that were possible! I...are you sure?"

Nedzu shrugged, “Look a look for yourself.”

He flipped the screen of his computer around and played a short video, which seemed to be taken in one of the testing rooms that the support course normally used for experiments. Togata was standing front and center and attempting to knock a soda can over using thick black strings that were growing from his hands. He wasn’t successful, but his control of the strongs seemed to improve the more he kept the new quirk activated.

“...oh.”

“The new quirk is called Black Whip.” Nedzu informed him. He slid a three-ring binder across the table for Toshinori to look at. “This is all the information that Deku was able to compile on the past holders. I would advise studying that thoroughly, as we have no way of predicting when or if Togata will develop each of these quirks. I have my own copy, as do Togata, Aizawa, and Midoriya, obviously.”

Toshinori was grateful he’d set aside his tea, because this time the only thing he choked on was blood, “Aizawa knows?!”

Well, that explained the glare he’d gotten that morning. Perhaps he should have told the man earlier, but it was supposed to be a secret and Toshinori had thought he’d had it handled. After decades of having this quirk, he should be the expert on it, but apparently he’d been slacking in his duty toward Togata. He wasn’t looking forward to staff meeting.

“Togata manifested Black Whip in the middle of a lesson that Aizawa was assisting with.” Nedzu said matter-of-factly. “Both he and Togata assumed it was a villain attack at first. Thankfully, both Deku and I recognized what was happening and we were able to resolve the situation quickly, but Aizawa refused to leave without an explanation, so we decided his assistance would be valuable, especially since these new quirks seem to be difficult to control when they first manifest.”

“That makes sense…” Toshinsori took a deep breath and decided to deal with that later. “Is that everything?”

Nedzu’s eyes twinkled and Toshinori felt his stomach sink, “Actually, there is the matter of final exams…”

“Ok, what’s going on?”

Izuku looked up from his English notes to see Shinso standing on the other side of the kitchen table, looking even more tired than usual, “Um...I’m studying for finals?”

“Haha.” Shinso deadpanned and pulled up a chair. “No, I’m talking about Dadzawa. He’s been more pissed than usual the past few days and I already asked Joke, who also doesn’t know what’s going on. You’re practically his kid, so what’s up with him?”

“Um…” Izuku couldn’t exactly tell him that Aizawa was mad because All Might passed on a super secret and super dangerous quirk to one of the third years without properly informing him of the risks or helping him control it. “Wait, does he know that you call him Dadzawa?”

“Don’t change the subject, Midoriya.” Shinso said. “What happened?”

Izuku sighed, “Can I just say he’s pissed at All Might and leave it at that?”

Shinso thought for a moment, “Actually, yeah, that checks out. He’s always complaining about the *big blonde oaf*. What’d he do?”

“Something stupid.” Izuku shrugged. “So nothing too out of the ordinary.”

“Cool.” Shinso was quiet for a second. “So...should we prank him?”

“Who, All Might?” Izuku chuckled. “Or Eraser?”

Shinso shrugged, “Either, but I was thinking Aizawa. What better way to distract him from whatever is annoying him than annoy him even more.”

Izuku stared at him, “I really don’t think introducing you to Ms. Joke was a good idea.”

“Too late.” Shinso smirked. “So…?”

Izuku tried not to give in, he really did, but he probably needed a distraction at this point as well. In fact, the whole class kind of did. Their finals started tomorrow and everyone was stressed and overworked, especially with the threat of not being able to go to the summer camp looming over their heads. Izuku felt a small smile make its way onto his face. Yeah, they could all use a bit of a distraction.

Izuku shut his English notes and stood up, “If we’re going to do this, we’re going to need some help.”

Shinso grinned, “I’m in.”

Izuku shook his head and led the way into the living room, where the girls were studying for match, “Yaomomo? Can we talk to you for a minute?”

Yaomomo looked up, slightly startled, but it only took her a moment to snap into class rep mode, “Of course! Follow me.”

She ignored the curious looks from the rest of the girls and silently led them to her room. Once they were alone, she shut the door and turned to them, a worried look on her face, “What is it? Are the two of you having problems adjusting to the dorms? Is someone hurt?”

“It’s nothing like that! Don't worry!” Izuku waved his hands frantically in front of him to dismiss her worries. “We, uh...well, we need your help. You can make anything with your quirk, right, as long as it’s not alive?”

Yaomomo blushed slightly, “Yes, I can.”

Izuku glanced at Shinso and gave a mischievous smile, “So if I were to give you a pattern, could you make clothes with them?”

“Quite easily, yes.” Yaomomo nodded. “What did you have in mind?”

“Alright class, it’s time for lights out…” Shouta trailed off as he took in the scene.

The entire class was watching a movie. Some of them were on the couch or sprawled on the floor or even on each other. Bakugo was even there, lying partially on top of Kirishima, which Shouta would have been almost proud of if it wasn’t for what his problem children were wearing.

Every single member of class 1A was wearing an identical pair of kitten pajamas.

They had each styled them differently, of course, in a way that showed their personality. For example, Kirishima had ditched the matching shirt and paired it with a tank top, while Yaoyorozu was wearing the two piece set exactly like it would be advertised in a

retail magazine and Uraraka had managed to get her hands on a matching headband with the same print.

Shouta immediately rounded on Deku, who was looking at him with a shit-eating grin, which only emphasized the fact that he was wearing pajamas of his own, “I trusted you.”

“Aw, come on, Dadzawa, don’t be like that!” Shinso interrupted, standing up and striking a pose. “Don’t you like ‘em?”

“Yaomomo made you a pair too!” Kaminari gave him a thumbs up.

“Go get dressed!” Mina yelled. “It’s picture time.

Shouta sighed, but had no choice but to take the offered bundle of clothes that Yaoyorozu was holding out to him. What was he going to do with these kids?

“I hate all of you.”

Chapter End Notes

Memes!
X X X

Apologies

Chapter Summary

Final Exams

Chapter Notes

Art!
Tess-fi
doodle
PeachyPie
Shanks
Loretta_HK1120

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku stared at the match-ups numbly. That was it. Nedzu was a sociopathic rat that got entertainment from torturing humanity and was not to be trusted. He'd find some other hyper-intelligent hero to teach him, because there was no way Nedzu was still sane if he thought these match-ups were a good idea.

All Might vs. Midoriya & Bakugo

Izuku hadn't had a lot of interaction with Katsuki since the whole fiasco with the battle exercise at the beginning of the year and it had been bliss. The teachers had made sure they weren't paired with or against each other during exercises and neither of them had sought each other out for anything, so Izuku had no idea why Nedzu had thought this matchup was going to be a good idea. Of course, Katsuki *had* been going to therapy, but Izuku didn't want to get his hopes up.

And to make it worse, the two of them were going to be paired against All Might, the one hero that hated him, because of course that made perfect sense. Izuku wouldn't put it beyond the number one hero to go harder on them than he was supposed to just to make sure they failed and prove that a quirkless kid could never be a hero. The alternative was that he'd go super easy on them out of some misguided sense of pity, which would be even worse because it would piss Katsuki off and

he'd blame Izuku. Either way, he was screwed.

Izuku glared at Nedzu, who simply smiled knowingly, which wasn't any help at all. He sighed and slumped his shoulders in defeat as all the students were all shuffled onto different buses and taken to the battle grounds. Eraser wouldn't let Nedzu fail him, right? Even if everything went wrong, it wouldn't be his fault and it didn't seem fair for him not to be able to go to the summer camp alongside the rest of the class. It wouldn't be logical.

Izuku forced himself to take a deep breath. Thankfully, the bus was large enough that he didn't have to sit right next to Katsuki, who had set up camp at the back of the bus, or All Might, who had stuck to the front. Sure, that left Izuku to awkwardly find a seat in the middle, but it was better than whatever forced small talk was the alternative. Seriously, what had that rat been thinking?!

As the bus drove on in silence, Izuku tried to focus on strategies he could use. He knew some of All Might's weaknesses, and Katsuki's, should he need them, but it was still hard to plan when he didn't even know if Katsuki would be willing to put aside *everything* and actually fight alongside him, or whether Izuku would be fighting two enemies instead of one. The only thing he *knew* he could count on was that All Might was going to underestimate him, but that still left him with a sour taste in his mouth. Joy.

It simultaneously felt like it took forever and no time at all for the bus to pull up to the fake city. Izuku grimaced and got off the bus, determinedly ignoring All Might as he hesitantly left to prepare for the battle. Katsuki hovered a few feet away from him in surly silence until All Might was out of sight.

"So, Deku." Katsuki huffed unexpectedly. "You're the strategist. What's the plan?"

Shouta could appreciate the logic in Nedzu's pairing, but the part of him that wasn't a teacher was still gnashing its teeth at pairing Deku with his bully. *Former bully,* he reminded himself forcefully. Hound Dog had given a glowing recommendation on Bakugo's progress and Nedzu wouldn't have dreamed of moving forward if he believed doing so would put a student in danger, so Shouta had swallowed his pride and let the match go forward. He just hoped they wouldn't regret it.

Still, he would pay money to see All Might's face when the *quirkless* student beat him. The oaf deserved a good hit to his pride at this

point.

Izuku blinked at Katsuki in shock, "...what?"

Katsuki rolled his eyes, "Isn't that your whole thing? Being smart and shit? So what's the plan?"

"I…" Izuku took a moment to reboot, "You're asking me for the plan?! *You?!"*

"Look, I know that I was shit to you growing up and I'm sorry." Katsuki growled. "But I'm trying to get stronger and be the best hero I can be, so stop complaining and let's strategize already!"

Izuku stared at him in disbelief for a long moment, "...what did you just say?"

"I said we're wasting time." Katsuki grumbled.

Izuku shook his head, "No, before that."

Katsuki glared at him, but Izuku could see he almost looked embarrassed, "You know what I said, I'm not gonna repeat myself. Now are we gonna beat All Might or not?!"

Izuku had never expected Katsuki to apologize. He'd never expected him to even realize that anything was wrong with his behavior, but well, for some reason it was weirdly fitting for him to just throw the apology out and leave it without any further explanation like he would do with anything else. It was just *there, take it or leave it* and that was that.

He found himself smiling hesitantly, "Well, he *is* the number one hero, so it would make the most sense to run away…"

He trailed off and Katsuki's eyes narrowed, "But we're not gonna do that, are we?"

Izuku grinned, relieved that Katsuki was willing to work with him, even if Izuku was still suspicious of him and wasn't quite willing to trust him again yet. "No, we're not."

Toshinori waited in the fake city, nervously fiddling with the weights that the support department had given him. Nedzu hadn't really given him a chance to say *no* when he'd presented this pairing and for some

reason that made Toshinori even more nervous. Also...well, he'd spent so long with the belief that a quirkless kid could never be a hero that he hadn't *truly* paid attention to what Deku's limits were. He knew young Midoriya had impressed a lot of heroes and helped take down Stain, but he'd been so preoccupied with his own blind prejudice and internalized insecurities that he wasn't exactly sure what the boy was capable of. Bakugo was easier, although still a wild card because he usually didn't do well with teamwork and was changing rapidly from what Hound Dog had informed them. Even with the unknowns, though, All Might was the number one hero, so he didn't expect they would give him too many problems.

The signal that the match had started rang out over the empty streets and Tosinori started scanning the streets for any movement. If the two were going to try to escape, which was the only choice, considering their opponent, they'd probably stick together and rely on stealth, which would be significantly more challenging for Bakugo than for Midoriya. He'd find the louder of the two, then use that to find the other and attack!

He was expecting to have to wait a bit longer, but after only a minute or two, Bakugo came sauntering out onto the street he was on, making no attempt to hide his movements. Toshinori watched him suspiciously, but even though Bakugo had obviously seen him and was walking straight toward him, he didn't show any indication of attacking. Was he a distraction? Would Bakugo even be *willing* to act as bait? And where was Midoriya, shouldn't they be attacking him together if they were going to try to beat him?

Toshinori pasted a large smile on his face and laughed, "Young Bakugo! Come to fight me, hero? What about your friend?"

"Deku?" Bakugo snarled. "That weakling is probably sniveling in a corner. This is our fight All Might! He doesn't stand a chance!"

Toshinori's first instinct was to sigh in relief that young Midoirya wouldn't get hurt, but something about Bakugo's words set off warning bells in his head. Midoirya was many things. Intelligent? Obviously. Reckless? Definitely. But a coward? No, Midoirya would never cower in a corner. He would find a way to think around a problem or he would face it head on, but if he hadn't run from the league or Stain, he wouldn't run from this fight either.

Bakugo was the distraction.

“The game is up, young man.” Toshinori informed him. “I know you’re trying to distract me and it’s not going to work. Where’s your partner?”

To his surprise, Bakugo just smiled, “Knowing it’s a distraction doesn’t seem like it’s doing you much good. You still don’t know where Deku is, but whatever. Maybe he’ll show you.”

Toshinori started to lunge forward to begin the fight, but he froze when he heard a sudden *bang* and then there was a sudden pain exploding in his side, right where his injury was. His eyes widened as he remembered that young Midoriya knew about his smaller form and therefore knew about his injury and was apparently fully willing to take advantage of it. He rushed to look around and find him, but a louder boom and burning pain took precedence. Bakugo smirked at him viciously as he set off explosion after explosion right on his injury as well.

Toshinori growled and grabbed Bakugo by the collar, tossing him like a ragdoll down the street and turned his attention to finding Midoriya. Another gunshot echoed through the street and he had to ignore the pain to focus on tracking the bullet. As soon as he had a general direction, he fired up One for All and covered the distance to the most likely building in one leap, landing heavily on the roof only to find it empty.

“Come out and face me, young Midoirya.” Toshinori called out, tearing the door to the building from its hinges. “You say that you’re capable of being a hero? Well, prove it!”

“Deku doesn’t have to prove shit to you.” Bakugo yelled above the sound of his explosions as he finally caught up and started attacking again. “We might not be heroes yet, but we’re strong enough to beat you!”

There was another gunshot and Toshinori hissed. How Midoirya was able to still aim for his injury even while Bakugo was attacking him and not hitting his classmate was admittedly impressive, but Toshinori couldn’t give up yet. He grabbed Bakugo again, this time by the arm and tossed him across the roof. He almost went inside the building before he realized that Midoriya needed to have a clear line of shot, so he must be on one of the other rooftops.

Toshinori bent at the knees and launched himself into the air, hoping to get a bird’s eye view. Most of the rooftops seemed empty, but one

of them was slightly taller than the others and had a patch of shadows that appeared just slightly too *solid* compared to the rest of the city. Toshinori immediately shifted his body and let himself fall toward that one, landing with a heavy thud as the concrete cracked slightly beneath him.

He grinned when he saw Midoriya crouching beside the railing, his eyes widening slightly as he realized that his cover was now useless, “Well, Deku, I’ve found you! What’s your next move, *hero.”*

Midoriya blinked in shock, then slowly grinned, “Tell me, All Might, has your time limit gone down since giving your quirk to Mirio?”

Toshinori froze, but only for a moment. When he saw Midoriya reach for something in his tool belt, he rushed to grab him, but started coughing as the rooftop filled with smoke. The chemicals, combined with how much blunt force trauma he’d taken to his injury in the last few minutes, made the coughing so much worse than it usually was, and Toshinori could taste blood as he punched the air to blow the smoke away so he could see his opponent again.

“I think it is.” Midoriya spoke from behind him and when Toshinori whirled around to face him, he was met with another shot to his side. “I think that passing on your quirk and going over your limits at the USJ has cut down the time you can fight significantly. In fact, if I’m not mistaken, that steam I see is a sign that you’re almost done for the day.”

Toshinori’s eyes widened. He didn’t *feel* close to his limits, but sure enough, steam was wafting around him, which meant that he needed to wrap this up quickly, “Ah, you may be intelligent young Midoirya, but I’m stronger!”

“Yeah right!” Bakugo slammed open the door to the roof and ran onto the rooftop, already launching an explosion at Toshinori’s weak spot. “Die!”

“Katsuki!” Midoriya cried out. “What took you so long?!”

“Motherfucker broke my arm. So I had to walk instead of fly.” Bakugo growled. Sure enough, he looked slightly worse for wear and one arm hung uselessly at his side. Toshinori winced. He hadn’t meant to *hurt* him!

There was movement behind him and Toshinori whirled around, growing desperate as the steam grew thicker. He couldn’t deflate in

front of young Bakugo! Another shot to his side told him which direction Midoriya was hiding in and it was only a split second before he had him in hand, “Give up, young Midoriya. I win.”

Midoriya just looked up at him and smirked, “Do you?”

An explosion sounded to his right and Toshinori turned to face young Bakugo, only to find smoke blowing away on the empty rooftop, “Where…?”

A loud bell echoed over the fake city, “All Might has been captured. Bakugo and Midoriya pass.”

Toshinori turned back in shock. Midoriya was still tight in his hold, grinning, but young Bakugo was standing right next to him, a confident smirk on his face as he tightened the cuffs a little more around Toshinori’s wrist, “You already knew I was the distraction, heh? Well I guess you forgot I’m not the only thing that explodes.”

“It wasn’t too hard to use smoke bombs and flashbangs to make you think Katsuki was on the other side of the roof.” Midoriya said proudly. “Your fight earlier was more than enough time to set up the trap and the pain from your weak point was enough to make it hard to feel when Katsuki got you with the cuffs on that same side. We win.”

Toshinori took a deep breath and let go of him, “Yes, young Midoriya, I believe you do. Now, young Bakugo, why don’t you run on ahead? I’m sure that Recovery Girl will give me an earful about your arm later and it will be better to get that healed sooner rather than later.”

Bakugo scoffed and rolled his eyes, but left Toshinori and Midoriya to follow along behind him, “Slowpokes.”

Toshinori sighed in relief and started making his way down the stairs, “I was worried he was going to see my other form…you didn’t tell him, did you?”

Midoriya smiled and shook his head, “I just told him to aim for your left side, not that you were close to your limit anyway.”

Toshinori stopped, “…what?”

Midoriya smirked and turned to look back at him, “What? Did you think I could fake an explosion, but not a little steam? Nedzu says to never underestimate the power of psychological manipulation.”

Toshinori froze and looked around. Now that they were off the rooftop, none of the steam that he'd seen before was present. He'd assumed that it was adrenaline keeping him from trusting his body's energy, but no. "It was a trap."

"Yep." Midoriya's eyes were filled with a silent challenge. "How's that for a quirkless weakling?"

Toshinori winced, "I suppose I owe you an apology, don't I? I was blinded by my own experiences before receiving One for All. I...well, you see, I used to be quirkless myself. I remember how hard it was and how weak...Anyway, I personally could not have become a hero without my mentor's help, but maybe you can."

The silence was deafening and Toshinori searched Midoriya's face expectantly for any sign of a reaction, but was instead met with a carefully stony expression. He grew a little more anxious as he realized that he had no idea how young Midoriya felt about his apology. He was about to give in and apologize again, if only to have something to do, when Midioriya broke the silence.

"You hurt me." Midoriya said simply. "When you said that I couldn't be a hero, something inside me broke and if it hadn't have been for Eraserhead and the support of the hero underground behind me, I would probably never have recovered."

Midoirya took a deep breath and continued, his eyes filled with anger, hurt, and some other emotion that Toshinori couldn't identify, "You crushed my dream and left me on a rooftop, All Might. Knowing why you did it doesn't erase that it happened and doesn't erase all the other times you tried to get me to give up. Even if you think you were justified or protecting me, that still doesn't excuse the way you've been treating me since the day we met. I'm grateful that you're recognizing your mistakes so that you don't hurt any other kids like you hurt me, but I can't forgive you. I'm sorry."

There were tears glistening in his eyes, but Midoirya didn't wipe them away as he turned his back and left Toshinori alone. He stared after the boy in shock, not quite sure how to respond. How badly had he messed up?

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 2.23.2021

Shopping

Chapter Summary

The mall trip!

Chapter Notes

Before we get into the art and memes like usual, I wanted to take care of one small order of business: Ships.
Have I changed my mind on ships multiple times since starting this story? Yes.
Am I going to change my mind again? Maybe.
Will commenting ship hate or anything similar in the comments do *anything* except make it more difficult for me to write this story? Absolutely not.
I ask for your patience as I try to make these stories the best they can possibly be.

Now onto the important stuff.

Art!
MadhatterKnight
Ghoshy
Claire;P
Feral Cryptid

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku smiled as the entirety of class 1A, plus or minus a few members, walked down the street toward the mall. Momo was making sure that they all stayed polite and didn't bother the other passerbys, but there was only so much they could do when Sero and Kaminari had somehow managed to start a game of tag that about half the class had been roped into.

After finals were over, Eraserhead had announced, entirely in character, that the threat of not going on the training camp had been a logical ruse, so the only member of the class that wouldn't be going was Iida, who assured them that he was on track to rejoin the class next semester, as long as everything kept going well with his suspension. Izuku was kind of bummed that he wouldn't be able to

come, but he was training on his own so he didn't fall behind, and he seemed to be making progress, from what Izuku had been able to tell.

As for everyone else, Mina had roped them all into visiting the new mall to pick up whatever they needed for the trip. Izuku himself didn't need all that much, but it was nice to be included. It was just so different from...well, from anything he'd ever experienced. His classmates didn't beat him up or treat him like glass and Katsuki was mostly leaving him alone. Even when they *did* talk, he was actually almost *nice.* It was surreal.

Uraraka jogged up so that she was walking beside him, "So, Deku, are you excited for the camp?"

Izuku nodded, "Yeah! I think it'll be a really good chance to really improve our skills and push ourselves beyond our limits! I mean, even more than we did during internships and everything!"

"I know!" Uraraka enthusiastically punched the air in front of her. "I'm hoping to figure out more ways to use my Gunhead martial arts to really help my quirk and fighting style, you know?"

"That's a great idea!" Izuku agreed. "You're a really good fighter already, though! You almost beat Katsuki at the sports festival."

"Yeah, I know…" Uraraka frowned. "There's just one more thing, though…"

"Oh?" Izuku asked. "What's that?"

Uraraka's grin was all the warning that Izuku got before she punched his arm and started running, "You're it!"

They were all slightly out of breath by the time they got to their destination, but Izuku couldn't find it in him to be upset about that. He just hoped that they would manage to not get kicked out of the mall...or not all of them, at least. Izuku himself was having hard time not geeking out about how all the different stores catered to quirk mutations and different needs. He'd encountered that quite a bit in stores all this life, what with being quirkless, but here, it was more on display. He was lucky that there were a couple of brands that catered to the wider foot that came with having an extra toe joint, so he didn't need to order custom clothing and footwear like some mutation quirks did, but he didn't think he'd ever forget buying his first pair of shoes after his diagnosis and realizing for the first time that they weren't

supposed to pinch his feet.

“Maybe we should split up into groups?” Momo suggested. “People who need similar items can shop together and then we can all meet up for ice cream later!”

“Sounds like a plan!” Kirishima grinned, grabbing Katsuki’s hand and, to Izuku’s surprise, he actually let himself get dragged. “Come on! Let’s go!”

It only took a few minutes for everyone to split up, but Izuku wasn’t quite sure what group to go with, since there wasn’t a lot of stuff that he needed and despite how much training he’d done with the underground heroes to improve his situational awareness, it still came as a surprise when he found himself alone with Uraraka. Maybe it was the suddenness that made it seem awkward because it wasn’t that he never talked to Uraraka! They were friends! But, even since Iida had gotten suspended, they usually still had Shouto or Momo or Tsu around as well. He could almost imagine how much Joke would tease him about being alone with a cute girl...or, well, just a girl! Not that Uraraka wasn’t cute! Izuku scowled stubbornly as he felt his face heat up. At least Shinsou had already gone into one of the stores, so at least he wasn’t around to add to the imaginary teasing.

Izuku realized they had been standing there for at least a couple of seconds too long and cleared his throat, “So, umm...what do you need to buy?”

“Not a lot. Just some bug spray…” Uraraka froze and she seemed to remember something, because her eyes suddenly went wide and her face turned so pink that it matched the blush that was almost always present on her cheeks. “Gotta keep those pests away!”

Izuku reached out helplessly to try to figure out what was wrong, because obviously something was, but Uraraka seemed to be resisting the urge to shove him away until she suddenly did just that and ran away toward the stairs, leaving him completely alone.

“...Am *I* the pest?” Izuku wondered quietly. He hadn’t thought he was annoying her, but that had been weird, right? She’d never run away from him before.

Izuku huffed in frustration and unlocked his phone.

Group Message

12857: *(Deku)*

What does it mean when a classmate suddenly turns red and runs away from you?

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Oh no, it's finally happening! Eraser! You're basically his dad at this point! Didn't you give him the talk?!

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

He has a mother, you've met her. You literally could not pay me enough to be involved in my student's love lives.

12857: *(Deku)*

Love lives?!?!

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Aw, Shou! Are you telling me that you don't ship any of your students?

2598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

Stop teasing Eraserhead and let's get back to the task at hand: determining whether this "classmate" is worthy of Deku or not.

12857: *(Deku)*

Guys, stop! It's not like that!

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Are they cute at least?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Come on, Shouta, you've got to have some clue who Deku's talking about.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Not paid to care.

12857: *(Deku)*

All of you have lost your advice privileges. Message me when you decide to be reasonable and actually *help* me.

Izuku groaned and shoved his phone back in his pocket. It wasn't about crushes or shipping or anything like that. Uraraka was his friend and was it so wrong to be worried aobut her? What if she was sick or something? Maybe he should text her?

He sighed and shook his head. He didn't want to bother her, and they'd be meeting up with the rest of the class in a few hours anyway, so he could ask her then if she was feeling well. Until then...maybe he could see if there was any new hero merch he didn't have? With any luck, the most recent batch of hero school graduates would already be starting to show up in some of the more niche stores. Izuku was just looking at the map to see where the best store would be when he felt someone come up beside him.

"You're that quirkless UA student, Deku, right?"

Izuku squashed out the flare of annoyance in his gut. Of course the fact that he was quirkless was the first thing this random stranger remembered about him, not that he did well at the sport festival or

helped take down Stain or anything. No. Just the fact that he was different.

“Oh, right, you also defeated the hero killer too.” The stranger said, casually throwing his arm around Izuku’s shoulder. “I can’t believe I’m running into you again. Sorry, that’s probably confusing. From your point of view, we haven't really met since the USJ.”

Izuku froze as the stranger wrapped a hand around his throat, keeping only his middle finger elevated, “It almost seems like it might be destiny, Izuku Midoirya.”

“Shigaraki.” Izuku gasped. How...how was he supposed to get out of this? One wrong move and he would bite the dust. Literally. The only potential weakness Izuku could think of was the fact that Shigaraki was threatening him with his left hand, the one that Izuku had almost taken a finger off of at the USJ. It looked like they’d been able to reattach it.

“Careful now.” Shigaraki grinned. “We’re just two friends having a little chat. You wouldn’t want anyone to get hurt, would you?”

Izuku grit his teeth, “If you kill me, a hero will come and catch you.”

“Oh, almost definitely.” Shigaraki admitted easily. “But how many of these mindless sheep could I take out before then? 10? 20? I don’t know, I’ve been leveling up recently. So, Deku, what’s it going to be?”

Izuku gulped and forced himself to relax, “Why are you here?”

“I just wanna talk.” Shigaraki said. “Now, let’s go find a place to sit. Remember one wrong move and…”

Izuku resisted the urge to flinch as the hand around his neck twitched slightly. This was bad. There were hundreds of people here and Shigaraki had just made it clear he was willing to hurt as many as he could reach. None of his classmates had their licenses and Izuku himself was literally about a half-inch from death at any moment. Well, like Nedzu said: where was the fun without the challenge?

Right?

Izuku let Shigaraki lead him over to the fountain and used the slight distraction to slowly reach into his pocket. He just hoped he hadn’t closed the group chat as he unlocked his phone with his fingerprint and forced himself to calm down. He needed a clear head if he

expected to make it out of this alive.

Shigaraki dragged him down by the neck so that they were both sitting down, “Look at everyone, smiling, not knowing how close to death they really are. They’re all so sure that a hero will save them.”

“That’s what heroes are supposed to do.” Izuku replied. “That’s what we’re training for.”

“No.” Shigaraki growled. “You’re all liars! You don’t save everyone.”

“I…” Izuku started, but he was cut off as Shigaraki’s hand squeezed his neck briefly.

“Shut up.” Shigaraki warned. “I hate basically everything right now, especially you. Don’t think that I’ve forgotten what you tried to do to my hand! You’re lucky that Sensei was able to reattach it, otherwise I would have killed you. But you’re not the only thing I hate right now. The hero killer is really pissing me off.”

Izuku swallowed and tried to type an sos without taking his phone out of his pocket, “The media made it seem like he was one of yours.”

Shigaraki frowned, “Yeah, but he wasn’t. But just because you and those other brats took him down, he’s all anyone’s talking about! My nomu aren't even a blip on their radar! Is it because he almost killed Endeavor? I almost killed *All Might?* Why is everybody talking about Stain like he’d the greatest thing since sliced bread?”

Izuku debated his options. He could stay silent, but the safest option seemed to be to play into the conversation and keep shigaraki talking until help could hopefully get here or someone realized that something was wrong. His first priority was just making sure he didn’t get dusted, so talking was his best chance at survival.

“I think it’s because they agree with him.” Izuku said slowly. “At least deep down. Obviously, I’d never kill to take down a false hero, but...well, I get it. Our society has a lot of flaws and it’s easy to think that violence is the only way to be heard.”

“All he really did was destroy the things he hated, same as me.” Shigaraki complained. “What makes us so different?”

“I don’t understand you and your goals.” Izuku stared at the floor as he rambled, absently noting that one of his shoelaces was starting to come untied. “I may not agree with the hero killer, but like I said, I

get it. Unlike you, he didn't destroy things just because they sounded fun. He destroyed them to lead to a better society."

Izuku kept staring at their feet as he waited tensely for Shigaraki to respond. The linoleum in the mall was already starting to get dirty despite how new the mall was, and the bright red of both his and Shigaraki's shoes stood out starkly against it. He could have gone for Shigaraki's style last time he'd bought shoes, but he'd gone with the hightops because one of his bullies in middle school had liked to try to use his quirk steal the shoes off his feet as he ran and Izuku had decided the high tops would be harder to steal. Both styles were sold by the same...brand…

"I think I get it now." Shigaraki said. "The problem is…"

"Why do you wear those shoes?"

Shigaraki scowled in confusion at the non-sequitur and Izuku gulped as he realized that he'd accidentally asked that out loud, but he just hadn't been able to keep it in. That brand catered specifically to the quirkless. It had a little more room in the toe to account for the extra toe joint and they were one of Izuku's favorite brands because they were still a good quality shoe and didn't wear out quickly, unlike most brands that just made a cheaper, uglier version of their normals shoes in an attempt to market inclusivity. The issue was that they weren't sold in stores, they had to be bought online, so most quirked people didn't even know they existed and would find them extremely uncomfortable if they did. Izuku had never seen those shoes on anyone with a quirk.

So why was Shigaraki wearing them?

"Sensei bought them for me." Shigaraki said irritably, bringing up his other hand to scratch at his neck. "They're comfy."

"The other shoes you've tried pinch your toes." Izuku's mind raced as he tried to make sense of everything. Shigaraki found normal shoes uncomfortable, but the quirkless brand was comfortable, which meant even though he definitely had a quirk, he had an extra toe joint.

Shigaraki was genetically quirkless.

"What does this have to do with Stain?!" Shigaraki scratched his neck a little more vigorously. "You're so annoying! You're always getting in the way and smiling and beating everyone even though you're justa quirkless brat that should be sniveling in the corner. You and All

Might, you both make people think that the impossible is possible, but it's not! The real truth is that people are weak and heroes never save you! Everyone is walking around, smiling and laughing, not knowing that their lives could end at any moment and the heroes wouldn't be able to do anything."

Suddenly, Shigaraki stopped scratching and tightened his left hand around Izuku's neck so that he could hardly breath. He was starting to get light headed and tried to pry the hand off, but the angle was weird and he had to focus on never coming into contact with all five fingers.

Shigaraki didn't even flinch as Izuku struggled, "Sensei wants me to keep you alive for some reason, but I don't get it! You're so annoying and you piss me off. Whatever, Sensei said it's my right to destroy what I hate, so I'll just tell him you didn't give me a choice."

Izuku's eyes widened and he tried harder to breath or get the hand off him or something, but he didn't have time to do anything before Shigaraki tightened his hand and gripped Izuku's neck with all five fingers.

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 03.01.2021

Handle

Chapter Summary

The mall.

Chapter Notes

Art!
Grumbee cat

Memes!
X X X

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

It might just be a pocket dial, those happen sometimes.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

True. I'll still never let him live this down.

12857: *(Deku)*

Help

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

...I don't think that's a pocket dial

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

@12579 Eraser, do you know where Deku is? He should be on campus, right?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

He's not. He and his classmates went to the new mall in Kiashi ward to prepare for the summer camp.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Crap. @12857 Deku, we need more information. Please respond. Are you safe?

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

His previous messages had typos, so he's most likely having to text without looking at his phone. It's likely some kind of hostage situation.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

I've notified Nedzu and am on my way.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Me too. ETA ten minutes. How fast will the rest of you be there?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

As soon as I can.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

I'm on my way as well.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

Hurry.

Izuku couldn't breathe, but he didn't know if that was from how tightly Shigaraki was gripping his neck or from blind panic as he felt the fifth finger touch his neck. Time seemed to slow down as he realized that this was it. Even if his SOS had managed to get to the heroes, Eraser was too far away to be able to get there in time. He was going to die. Izuku flinched, closing his eyes in preparation for the inevitable.

But nothing happened.

Izuku's eyes flew open. Shigaraki was holding his neck with his left hand, the one that Izuku had almost destroyed at the USJ. Even if the finger had been reattached, it was likely that at least some damage had been done.

"Crap!" Shigaraki muttered. "Stupid glitch…"

He raised his finger, most likely to try again, but Izuku didn't give him the chance. All caution got thrown out the window and he elbowed Shigaraki in the stomach and screamed at the top of his lungs, "There's a villain in the building! Everybody run!"

The hit and his scream threw Shigaraki off just enough that when Izuku grabbed his wrist and squeezed as hard as he could, his grip loosened just enough that Izuku was able to twist out of his hold. Izuku jumped back as quickly as he could to put some distance between them, eyes tensely glued on Shigaraki as they stared each other down, ignoring the chaos and panic that had exploded around them.

"Cheater!" Shigaraki snarled. "It's your fault I have this stupid glitch! You did damage and corrupted my code! I'll kill you!"

Izuku resisted the urge to let out a panicked giggle. Shigaraki was acting like that was a bad thing, but that *glitch* had just saved his life. Disintegration was finicky and unpredictable on his left side due to damage at the USJ. It was nice to know, but Izuku wasn't going to bet on planning around that weakness. He didn't think he'd get so lucky a second time.

There was movement in the corner of his eye, but he didn't turn to look as Uraraka slid to a stop beside him, already ready for combat, "Deku, what's the situ...is that Shigaraki?!"

"Help evacuate and contact Eraser." Izuku ordered. "Tell our classmates not to use their quirks. Legally, being quirkless gives me a little more leeway to fight back as long as I don't use my weapons, but I don't want our classmates getting in trouble."

"You're already in trouble, you cheater!" Shigaraki yelled. "I'll kill every last one of you!"

He charged and Izuku rolled into a dodge, "I'll keep him busy, Uraraka! Get everyone out!"

Izuku couldn't afford to take his eyes off of Shigaraki, but he didn't see Uraraka as he continued dodging, so he assumed that she had listened. Shigaraki ran at him again, this time with his right hand outstretched, and Izuku had to dodge again. This was the highest stakes game of tag that Izuku had ever played, but if he could just keep it up until the heroes arrived…

"Close combat fighters! Form a line and keep civilians away from the

main fight!" Momo instructed. "Long range fighters! Focus on evacuation! Use the second floor where possible to increase distance!"

He didn't know exactly where Momo was at the moment, but out of the corner of his eye he could see Katsuki, Kirishima and some of his other classmates starting to surround the main plaza where he and Shigaraki were fighting. Behind them, terrified civilians streamed by, directed by the rest of their class to the nearest exit. Eraser would be proud.

"Kaminari, have you been able to contact Aizawa?" Todoroki shouted.

Kaminari's voice came from somewhere on the second floor. "He's on his way!"

"Ask him for permission to fight!" Todoroki ordered. "Hagakure, Jiro, Koda! Sweep the mall and make sure Shigaraki doesn't have any reinforcements!"

Shigaraki snarled again and picked up his pace. His previous misses had led to some of the furniture and parts of the floor becoming partially disintegrated, so Izuku was forced to be more and more careful the longer the fight continued. All it would take was a single stumble, "Come on, Eraser, where are you?"

"Just give it up, extra!" Katsuki shouted. "The heroes are on their way and Deku's fast as hell! You may as well give up now."

"Shut up!" Shigaraki growled. "Stupid NPCs…"

"Attacking on our day off like this is super unmanly!" Kirishima yelled. "Why not wait until we have our licenses to fight back?!"

Shigaraki shook his head and charged again, but Izuku smiled as he realized what his classmates were doing. They didn't have permission to fight back *physically,* so they were doing it mentally. The more taunts and jeers they yelled in Shigaraki's direction, the more distracted he would get and the more likely it was that Izuku would be able to survive for long enough for the heroes to arrive.

"Keep going!" Izuku encouraged.

"Yo dustbin!" Sero yelled from somewhere. "Get some chapstick!"

"Go troll some online forum, crusty!" Mina shouted. "Go be an incel

somewhere else!”

The insults just kept coming and Shigaraki got increasingly frustrated. A few times, he tried attacking one of Izuku’s classmates, but every time, they would just dodge as well, which made Shigaraki even angrier, “Stupid cheaters! This is a boss fight! Fight me!”

“Nah, you’re not even worth our time!” Katsuki taunted. “You’re not a boss fight, you’re just an extra!”

Shigaraki’s face turned red and he looked like he was about to explode in rage, but instead, he exploded in laughter, “Haha, what, hehe, what’s going on?!”

Izuku grinned and relaxed slightly, “Ms. Joke!”

“Hey kiddo.” Joke jumped down from the second floor, landing in a roll beside him. She may have been smiling, but Izuku could still tell that she was completely pissed and it made her smile even more scary than a frown would be. “Eraser’ll be here in a minute. We were just a little closer.”

“We?” Izuku asked.

Mr. Brave ran to his other side, “You didn’t think we’d leave you on your own after you asked for our help, did you?”

Shigaraki scratched at his neck so furiously that it started turning red, “Cheaters! Bringing back up to a boss fight and changing up the levels like that…”

Mr. Brave quickly created a javelin-like weapon out of his hair and lobbed it at Shigaraki, who simply caught it and turned it to dust in his hand. Now that the heroes were here, the real fight was about to begin.

When Shouta got to the mall, he was expecting to find complete chaos. The media had already started gathering, but to his surprise, some of his students had joined with the mall cops and the few police officers that had already arrived to form a police line. Aoyama was smiling and playing to the cameras, assuring the reporters that everything was fine and that they were doing everything they could to evacuate the building and keep everyone safe, but refusing to give any other information as far as Shouta could tell. It was enough to keep them from getting angry and trying to force their way past the line,

and also appeared to be calming the panic in the civilians who had just evacuated the mall.

“Aizawa!” Tsu waved to him as she herded a few civilians down the stairs. “That’s the last of the civilians inside!”

Shouta nodded, running past her to get inside. “Good work.”

He heard people yelling and laughing, which he hoped meant that Emi had arrived, and he followed the sounds until he was looking down at the main plaza. About half of his class had formed a line around the main plaza, most likely to keep civilians from getting too close to the main fight and a tired-looking Deku was just backing away as Ms. Joke and Mr. Brave took over the fight. Shouta jumped down and activated his quirk, “Shigaraki. I’m not going to let you hurt my students!”

Shigaraki’s eyes widened as he was wrapped in the capture weapon, “Eraserhead?!”

He kept his eyes on Shigaraki as he and the other heroes advanced, “Give yourself up, Shigaraki…”

“Sensei!” Yaoyorozu yelled. “Behind you!”

He felt a sharp blow to his kidneys and Shouta whipped around just in time to see a last trace of purple disappear. Then everyone was yelling and Joke and Brave were lunging forward toward Shigaraki. Shouta felt his capture weapon go slack and hurried to whip back around, only to find his capture weapon cut cleanly through and no villains to be seen.

He scowled in frustration, “Kurogiri?”

Emi sighed, “Yep.”

“We should search the rest of the mall.” Shouta said, shoulders slumping in defeat. “There might be more of them.”

“The first floor is clear.” Hagakure’s voice replied, almost making him flinch. “I searched everywhere, but there’s no sign of any villains.”

“Second floor is clear too.” Jiro jogged up to them. “I couldn’t hear anyone.”

To his surprise, Koda was the next to speak up, albeit more quietly

than the others had, “The roof and basement are clear too. I asked the pigeons and rats to check.”

“It looks like Kurogiri just came to extract Shigaraki.” Deku observed, walking up to the group. “From what I could tell, it was more of a spur of the moment thing rather than a planned attack.”

Shouta glanced over and he froze as he noticed that Deku was shaking. He had seen this kid fearlessly face down villains before. He got scared, obviously, he was just a kid, but for him to be this seriously shaken up...what had happened?!

“Well that was fun..." Deku chuckled nervously. "Now if you don't mind, I think I'm just gonna go pass out now and celebrate the fact I'm not dead."

That did absolutely nothing to make Shouta less worried. “You do that. Tsukauchi will take your statement when he arrives...Good work, problem child.”

Deku gave a tired smile, but it didn’t reach his eyes as he walked off to find any place to sit that hadn’t already been turned to dust.

Chapter End Notes

More Memes!
X X X X X X X X

Next Update: 03.07.2021

Comfort

Chapter Summary

Aftermath

Chapter Notes

Art!
Claire ;P
Kattrina123
Die_sonne
EmEm

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ochako gripped the strap of her duffel bag a little tighter and looked over the bus. She could probably sit with Momo or Tsu, neither of them would complain, but even though sitting next to Deku for the entire ride to the training camp was absolutely terrifying, she gathered up her courage and started making her way back to where he was sitting. The last few days had been a whirlwind of packing, police interviews, and somewhat avoiding the media, but even with how busy they had all been, Deku had been more quiet than she expected and Ochako was starting to get worried. So even if it might be awkward sitting next to her *maybe, but probably not, so stop being so silly* crush, it would be worth it if she could make sure he knew that he had someone in his corner. That's why they were friends, right?

She used her quirk on her bag so that she could hold it above her head and not have to worry about knocking it into the other seats she passed. Deku was on a bench about three quarters of the way to the back of the bus, so she had to pass most of the class to even reach him and even when she did, she had to call his name twice to get him to stop staring absently out the window and actually realize she was there.

"Oh! Uh, Uraraka!" Deku smiled apologetically. "Um, hi?"

Ochako gave what she hoped was a comforting smile, instead of a nervous one, "Is it ok if I sit with you?"

Deku nodded frantically, “O-of course! If you want to, that is, you don’t have to or anything…”

“Of course I want to!” Uraraka assured him, sliding her duffle under the seat and releasing her quirk. “I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t.”

Deku flinched almost imperceptibly, “Sorry, guess I’m still getting used to people hanging out with me by choice.”

Ochako shrugged, careful not to let her face show how much that hurt her heart, “Well then, I guess it’s about time you get used to it!”

Deku smiled, “Yeah, I, uh, I guess it is!”

Ochako was freaking out about what else she was supposed to say when Kaminari came slumping onto the bus, groaning loudly, “Why is it so early?”

“Because otherwise we’d be getting to the camp in the middle of the night, dumbass!” Bakugo yelled from the back of the bus. “And what’re you gonna do when you’re a hero, huh? You’re just gonna not save people because the mission happens before sunrise?!”

Bakugo was tucked into the back corner, a sleepy-eyed Kirishima the only thing between him and the window. Kirishima’s arms wrapped lazily around Bakugo’s shoulders, which gave him more than enough room to snuggle into his boyfriend’s chest. No wonder Mina wouldn’t stop squealing about how cute they were. Ochako still wasn’t quite sure how those two had managed to get together, but they made a surprisingly good pair. Bakugo had tamed down considerably since the start of the school year, and Kirishima was good at bringing out that softer side while still letting him be...well, *Bakugo.* And Bakugo *was* undeniably still Bakugo, as evidenced by the time that Monoma had complained loudly about their pda and Bakugo had just glared at him until he slowly backed away. Even Deku had laughed when that had happened.

Kaminari didn’t give any more attention to Bakugo’s insults than he usually did. Instead, he grinned and pushed his way to the back seat as Mina dragged an almost asleep Sero closer to the window to make room for him. Ochako smiled. There was just something about class trips that gave off an inexplicable sense of comradery, even if most of her classmates were half-asleep. It was sweet.

“Is that everyone?” Aizawa asked, sleeping bag already out and ready on the seat beside him. “Great. Don’t be too loud, let other people

sleep, and get ready for hell."

Ochako smiled and shook her head as some of their classmates groaned and she caught Deku doing the same beside her, "He really does like those logical ruses, doesn't he?"

Deku rolled his eyes, "Nah, he just enjoys being dramatic. He's not lying this time, though. He knows how dangerous being a hero really is, so I don't think he's going to go easy on any of us this week."

Ochako clenched her fist, "Then we'll just have to rise to the challenge!"

Deku smiled and gave her a fist bump, "Yeah!"

They'd been driving for two hours now and most of their classmates were asleep. Izuku wished he could join them, but his brain really hadn't relaxed enough to get anything more than nightmares since the mall incident. Everything had just gone so fast and his classmates had handled everything so well, so the real stress of the situation hadn't really hit him until after everything was over and he was alone in his room.

He'd almost died. If Shigaraki's quirk hadn't been damaged at the USJ, his throat would be nothing more than blood and dust and who knows how many others would have died as well before Shigaraki made his escape. The only thing that had kept his mom from having to plan his funeral was a split second and pure dumb luck. He was sitting here, about to go on a school field trip like any normal student, when really he should be dead.

He was determined to act normal though, if only to keep everyone else from worrying. When Tsukauchi and Aizawa had asked what happened, he'd glazed over the part where Shigaraki had put his final finger down. He knew how protective Eraser was, but the last thing he wanted was for him to storm the league's hideout, wherever it was, and impulsively try to destroy Shigaraki. Even if he knew that ERaser was logical enough that he'd realize how idiodic that was, the only other option would be him sitting with the knowledge that his student had almost died and he hadn't been able to do anything about it.

So Izuku just hadn't said anything. He'd described getting taken hostage, and eventually wriggling out, but if he never said anything about the moment his heart almost stopped, then he wouldn't have to worry anybody. It wasn't like he wasn't used to keeping stuff like this

secret! He'd kept the bullying a secret for years, so he knew he was strong enough to handle it. And what didn't kill him would make him stronger, right? So, since he wasn't dead, he would just use this to make him into an even better hero!

Both Aizawa and Nedzu had suggested therapy, but Izuku had said he needed a little time before deciding. There was really only one counselor at UA and he didn't want to take away valuable time that his classmates or the other hero students could be using when they needed it so much more than he did. He was used to being hurt and having obstacles, so he knew how to deal with it, but a lot of his classmates were having to confront that for the first time and, judging by what had happened with Iida, probably needed more help than Izuku did. He was considering just thanking Nedzu for the offer and letting him know that he was fine on his own so that Hound Dog could focus on helping the people who really needed it.

Izuku shifted slightly to stare out the window again, careful not to jostle Uraraka too much. He was pretty sure she hadn't *tried* to fall asleep on his shoulder, but she'd been dozing off and almost fallen over a few times, so when the bus had taken a turn and pushed her into him, he hadn't pushed her away. It was a small bus and pretty much everyone was laying on top of one another at this point because that was really the only comfortable way to sleep, so there was no reason to make it weird. He just hoped that he wasn't blushing when she woke up. That would be awkward.

He'd used his insomnia to write a couple articles to use against Stain's reputation. He'd even published one of them! Nedzu had warned him, though, that it was probably going to take quite a few articles to make any difference. Hero society had always had cracks, Stain had just widened them and let water start gushing out. Things like that couldn't be fixed in days or weeks, no matter how much they wished they could. Life just didn't work like that.

But they'd fix it. Izuku wouldn't stop until they did. He'd been given so much: an opportunity to prove himself and be useful to the heroes, a place to make friends, and now even a second chance at life. With everything he had been given, he had a responsibility to pay it back and make sure things were better for everyone and that the people he cared about didn't have to worry.

Izuku didn't realize how tense he'd gotten until Uraraka grabbed his arm. He flinched violently, then saw her concerned face and forced himself to relax, "Oh, Uraraka, I'm sorry, did I wake you up?"

Uraraka shook her head, “I’ve been kinda in-and-out, you know? What about you? Are you ok?”

Izuku flashed her a practiced smile, “I’m great, it’s just hard to sleep on a bus, so…”

Uraraka looked like she didn’t believe him and Izuku forced his mucsles to relax and tried to be convincing, but she just narrowed her eyes, “You don’t have to lie, you know. We’re *friends* Deku, I’m not going to judge you or anything if you’re not ok.”

“I”m not lying, uraraka, I’m really fine.” Izuku insisted. “I’m sorry for worrying you.”

Uraraka searched his face for another long moment before her expression softened into something halfway between understanding and sympathy. It was a little too close to pity for Izuku’s comfort, but somehow she still managed to make it look good. At least he knew she didn’t mean anything by it, at least he hoped she didn’t. Izuku didn’t think he could handle it if Uraraka started thinking he was weak or less capable like everyone else did.

“You didn’t tell anyone, did you?” Uraraka asked finally, voice low enough that even if their classmates had been awake, they wouldn’t have been able to catch what she was saying. “About Shigaraki?”

Izuku forced a chuckle, “Of course I told people, you were there! The whole class helped me out! And I talked to the police after. I’m *fine,* Uraraka, I promise.”

“That’s not what I mean.” Uraraka seemed to hesitate, not knowing what to do with her hands, before she just settled for grabbing his hand gently. “You didn’t tell the police that Shigaraki actually touched you with all five fingers, did you?”

Izuku froze. How had she known that? He remembered that she had been the first one to come to his side once he’d gotten away, but had she been watching before that? Or was she just trying to come up with some explanation for his behavior and that was the most dramatic one?

Izuku tried to smile, “Come on, Uraraka, you know that if that had happened, I’d be dead right now.”

Uraraka shook her head, “Not with what happened at the USJ. I was coming back to get you, but then I saw you with this weird guy and

didn't even realize it was Shigaraki until he put that last finger down and started yelling about a glitch."

"Oh." Izuku said quietly. He felt like all the air had been knocked out of him. So much for not worrying anyone.

"I get not wanting anyone to worry about you." Uraraka started rubbing his hand absentmindedly as she stared out the window. "I don't tell my parents half the stuff that happens here, but that's what we've got friends for, right? We've got people there for us who can understand, even when our parents or other people can't."

"I…" Izuku swallowed. "I didn't…"

Uraraka looked up at him insistently, "We helped you fight him, didn't we? Let us...let *me* help you now."

Izuku felt the tears that he'd been holding back for days start pricking at the corners of his eyes, "I was so scared."

Uraraka nodded, "I can't even imagine it. But you fought back. You survived."

"I was lucky." Izuku whispered. "I should be dead."

Uraraka looked at him for another long moment before she got an oddly determined expression on her face and held out her arms in a silent offer for a hug. Izuku didn't look at her face so that he could ignore the fact that they were both bright pink as he fell into her arms. Something about knowing that she was there broke down the last walls that had been straining to hold back all the fear and panic that he'd been refusing to feel since the mall and he suddenly found himself silently sobbing against her shoulder as tears ran down his face.

"Your shirt." Izuku choked out. "I'm sorry, I shouldn't...I can stop."

Uraraka shrugged as best she could without breaking the hug, "It's a camp shirt, Deku, it's supposed to get dirty. D-don't worry about it, just...let me be here for you."

Izuku hesitated for another moment before nodding. He trusted her. He *had* to trust her. And, well, even though he felt guilty for breaking down on her like this, it was surprisingly nice. After trying to keep everything inside, it was a relief to let it all out, even if he was probably not going to be too embarrassed to even look at her after

this.

At some point, she'd started running her fingers through his hair, if only to have something to do, and Izuku couldn't help melting into the sensation, "I was so scared."

"I know." Uraraka whispered. "I know."

Izuku didn't know how long he sat there with Uraraka's fingers carding through his hair, but he was pretty sure he was still crying when he finally drifted off into the first dreamless sleep he'd had since he'd survived.

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 03.13.2021

Journey

Chapter Summary

Class 1A makes it to camp!

Chapter Notes

Art!
Claire;P

Memes!
X X X X

My apologies for the late update, I needed a mental health day yesterday.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku was groggy when he woke up and it took him a minute to realize that he had fallen asleep in Uraraka's arms. Instantly, his face turned red and he shot up as quickly as he could, which was apparently too fast, considering that his head hit her chin on the way up and he woke her up in one of the most painful ways possible.

"I..I'm so sorry!" Izuku apologized frantically.

"It's fine…" Uraraka grimaced as she rubbed her chin. "Um, are we stopping already?"

Izuku looked out the window as the bus pulled off the side of the road, "I guess so. The bus slowing down must have been what woke me up."

He had assumed they'd hold the training camp somewhere farther away, but it was only mid-morning, so this must just be a pit-stop. The only problem with that assumption was that he couldn't see a single restroom or gas station in sight. Eraser stood up at the front of the bus and cleared his throat, "Alright, everyone out."

The students looked at each other suspiciously, but obediently filed off the bus and stood awkwardly in a clump outside as they waited for Aizawa to give them their next instructions. Izuku knew he wasn't the only one that was starting to wonder if this was one of Eraser's logical ruses. Why were they stopping in the middle of nowhere?

Their worries were confirmed when Eraser spoke up, hiding a grin behind his capture weapon, “You didn’t think this was a normal rest stop, did you?”

The students watched curiously as a car pulled up and two women got out, followed by a small kid who looked like he would really rather have stayed in the car, “Perfectly cute and catlike! You can call us the wild wild pussycats!”

“Students, this is Mandalay and Pixiebob.” Aizawa sounded almost bored. “They are some of the pros we’ve asked to help out on this training camp.”

“Ok…” Shinso drawled. “And, uh, who are they?”

“They’re the pussycats!” Izuku said excitedly. “I’ve never worked that much with them, but they focus on rescue and they’re some of the most experienced in the industry! They’ve been a hero team for over twelve…”

Izuku froze as a hand was shoved over his mouth and he almost panicked. He only just barely kept himself from twisting Pixiebob’s arm out of socket by forcefully reminding himself that this wasn’t Shigaraki grabbing him. He wasn’t in danger and Aizawa was here to help him if he ever was. He was safe.

“Now then, kitten, we’re still young.” Pixiebob warned. “We’re still paragons of cat-like youth!”

“Anyway…” Aizawa rolled his eyes. “They’re going to be helping you push your quirks and skills to the limit over the next week, so be prepared to suffer. Also they own this entire property.”

“That’s pretty cool.” Kaminari said. “But, uh, it kinda seems like a whole lot of nothing.”

Mandalay laughed, “Well, it *is* mostly forest, but our base is over there at the base of those mountains!”

The class exchanged nervous glances as they all thought the same thing. If the base was *there,* then why were they *here?*

“Uh...maybe we should just get back on the bus…” Kirishima started inching back.

“Yeah, sounds like a good idea.” Ojiro agreed, following nervously.

“Lunch is at noon!” Pixiebob said. “Naughty kittens who are late don’t get to eat!”

“Pixiebob’s got a dirt manipulation quirk!” Izuku yelled. “Get away from the edge of the cliff!”

They all turned and started running, but Izuku’s warning didn’t do much good when the earth literally scooped them up and washed them down into the forest below. The students rubbed at their various bruises and Izuku thought through the possibilities. There was a chance that this was just a normal hike, just way longer than usual, but with Eraser in charge, Izuku doubted it, which left him with a problem: all the other other kids had brought their quirks on the bus, but he hadn’t brought his weapons.

He heard the sound of shifting dirt and glared up at the top of the cliff, which was already starting to reform after collapsing beneath them. Aizawa was peering down at them, an eyebrow raised as he flung something over the cliff, “Get going kids, you don’t have all day.”

The students all jumped back as a small duffle bag hit the ground, kicking up a plume of dust as it landed. Jiro eyed it suspiciously, “Who wants to bet that it’s a bomb?”

“No bet.” Sero said quickly. “That seems just like something Aizawa would do.”

“Oi, stop being a bunch of cowards!” Katsuki groped and stalked toward it. “I’ve got explosion resististence, I’ll check the damn thing.”

The class held their breath as Bakugo kicked the bag softly, then bent down and unzipped it. When he saw what was inside, he huffed and stood up, jerking his thumb toward Izuku, “Are you kidding me? It’s for the nerd.”

Izuku narrowed his eyes in confusion, but hurried to the bag and opened it up to find his weapons. He glanced up to see Eraser smirking at the top of the cliff, and flipped him off before he disappeared. Izuku sighed, “Katsuki’s right. These are my weapons, which means we’re most likely walking into a fight.”

“Umm, monsieurs?” Aoyama said hesitantly, pointing toward the forest. “I do believe that fight has come to us.”

There were more dirt monsters than Izuku really thought were necessary, but he supposed their class had already fought the league twice, if they were counting that thing at the mall, so Eraser wanted to up the ante. Still, these dirt monsters were like the robots at teh entrance exam. They were big, stupid, and favored physically destructive quirks.

Katsuki and Kirishima were leading the pack, obviously, working side by side to clear a path for the rest of the class by taking out as many of the monsters as they could. They worked really well together, and the rest of their friends formed a kind of support team around them to watch their backs and handle any monsters that would try to attack while they were surrounded. Izuku couldn't help thinking that they would probably be fairly successful as daylight heroes if they all just started their own agency out of high school.

Even with the bakusquad leading the pack, however, there were plenty of dirt-monsters for the rest of them. Shouto was freezing any monsters that approached them from the right, allowing Ojiro, Sato and the other physical fighters to finish them off quickly. After a few minutes of this, Izuku smiled when he noticed a small flame on his left hand. With how much flammable vegetation there was here, it wasn't really safe to use fire attacks, but Shouto was still making an effort to use his left side to regulate his temperature. He'd come so far since the sports festival.

With how biased these monsters were toward quicks that would literally blow them apart, Izuku and Shinso were having more difficulty than most of the class were. Thankfully, Shinso's capture weapon had been tucked underneath Izuku's weaponry, so he was able to hook it around branches and swing down from the trees to kick the monsters with devastating momentum. Izuku had figured out fairly quickly that his guns weren't much use against the bigger monsters. They just absorbed the bullets like they were nothing and left Izuku growling in frustration until one of his classmates was able to take them out.

The smallest monsters, however, could be dispensed with a well placed headshot or two. It wasn't much, at least compared to some of his classmates herculean efforts, but at least if he took out all the small ones, his classmates could focus on the bigger threats without being distracted. It was just difficult to get a good shot with all the chaos. If only he had a birds-eye view…

"Uraraka!" Izuku called out and made his way toward her just as she

was dropping another of the monsters from the sky. “Can you take away my gravity, please?”

Uraraka nodded and absentmindedly grabbed his hand, making Izuku blush as he started floating. When she realized it, she blushed and her grip loosened for a split second before she realized that Izuku would probably just float away if she wasn’t holding onto him, “Oh, um, what do you have in mind?”

Izuku grinned, “If I’m in the trees, I can see the whole battlefield and have a clear shot to all the monsters! Your quirk is just the fastest way up.”

Uraraka returned his smile and let go, “Just tell me when you want me to release my quirk!”

Izuku waited until he was pretty high up to latch onto one of the larger trees with his grappling hook, “Alright, I’m ready!”

He felt his gravity return and he landed heavily on the branch as Uraraka ran off after another monster. He smiled at how well everyone was fighting before shaking his head and taking aim. They still had a long way to go.

By the time they reached the pussycat’s base, Ochako’s mouth was sour and her entire body felt clammy and flushed. She’d lost count of the number of times she’d thrown up, but after at least three, that was probably for the best. Her classmates were in a similar state. Yaomomo seemed like she was about to pass out from starvation, Bakugo was massaging his wrists, and Tsu’s tongue hung limply out of her mouth, too exhausted to retract fully. Even Izuku was exhausted, arms shaking from the effort of pulling himself from tree to tree and he wobbled as he finally walked on solid ground for the first time in several hours. He’d run out of bullets near the end and Ochako had taken away his gravity as he swung from the trees like Sero and Shinso had been doing, returning his gravity at just the right moment for him to do the most damage.

He’d been so sweet and concerned about her overworking her quirk and had only relented when she’d pointed out that he weighed practically nothing, at least in comparison to the monsters she was lifting. Still, even with how little he weighed, the effort of using her quirk so much was exhausting and Ochako wanted nothing more than to shower and fall into bed. If only Aizawa would go easy on them just this once, but she knew better than to get her hopes up.

“Excellent time, kittens!” Pixiebob grinned as they walked out from the trees. “I guess we based lunch on how long it would take *us,* sorry!”

“Is she seriously humble-bragging right now?” Sero muttered. “Like we know we’re weak, but hey!”

“Some of you did even better, though!” Pixiebob’s eyes gleamed with an eagerness that made Ochako squirm. “I’m gonna take a special interest in those kittens!”

Her heart fell. Pixiebob was going to single out Deku, wasn’t she? Ochako felt a surge of jealousy rise up without her permission. Deku had obviously taken out more monsters than the rest of them had, picking off almost every single monster that was small enough for his bullets to do damage and he hadn’t even let running out of bullets stop him. He was obviously one of the most dedicated heroes in their class.

To her surprise and, oddly enough, indignation, Pixiebob ran past Izuku without even a second glance. Instead she grabbed Bakugo, Kirishima, and Todoroki, hugging them close to her with strong arms that they were too exhausted to do anything besides glare at. How dare she? Was it because Deku was quirkless? Was that why he wasn’t good enough for her? Who did she think she was to ignore all of his hard work just because the others were more flashy?

Ochako’s quickly spiraling thoughts stopped suddenly, coming to a halt as she examined them in disbelief. She’d been jealous just at the idea of Pixie-bob choosing Deku, but then when she hadn’t, she’d been angry about it? How did that make any sense at all?

“Leave my students alone.” Aizawa drawled. “They’re underage.”

“I can be patient.” Pixiebob pouted, but let go of the boys, who edged back toward the rest of the students in quiet exhaustion.

“Sorry about her.” Mandalay said kindly. “She’s of the age to take a mate.”

“Whatever…” Bakugo tsked and grabbed Kirishima’s hand as he glared at her, “Some of us are already taken.”

That got a fair amount of snickers from the class as Pixiebob turned red. Even Aizawa was hiding a grin as he welcomed them. “Good job, brats, you did fairly decent, but that doesn’t mean you can relax. We’ll

give you a break tonight, but it only gets worse from here on out."

Ochako joined in as the class collectively groaned. She glanced over at Deku, whose face was pinched in the way that normally meant he was trying to figure out a mystery. She followed his eyes and realized that the little kid they'd seen with the pussycats earlier was here as well.

"Um, speaking of ages…" Izuku spoke quickly before Pixiebob could have a chance to threaten him again. "Who is he? He seems a little young to be here…"

"Oh, that's my nephew, Kota." Mandalay explained. "He lives here with us! Kota, why don't you say hi?"

Ochako smiled as Deku walked up to the kid and held out a hand, "Hey Kota! It's nice to…"

The kid was fast and the only reason she saw the blow coming was her training with Gunhead. Thankfully, Izuku had trained extensively under Aizawa, or maybe it was because he had to react quickly to survive when he was fighting people with strong quirks, but before most of their classmates even realized what was happening, Deku had rolled around to behind Kota and the kid's punch threw him off balance as his fist hit empty air.

Izuku frowned and grabbed the kid by the collar so he wouldn't fall, "It's not nice to try to punch people when they try to introduce themselves, Kota."

"Stupid heroes." Kota muttered, pulling forcefully away from Izuku and adjusting his shirt. "Showing off with your stupid quirks. I hate all of you!"

"Hah, you got spunk kid, I'll give you that." Bakugo snorted. "But the nerd didn't even *need* a quirk to make a fool out of you."

Kirishima cuffed him over the head, "Dude, he's just a kid, be nice."

"Hey, I was nice!" Bakugo yelled. "I gave him a compliment, didn't I?"

Mandalay sighed, "Sorry about him. He doesn't like heroes much."

"That must be awkward…" Aizawa sighed. "Everybody get your stuff off the bus. You don't get to eat until your bags are in your room, so get going."

Ochako dragged herself back to the bus, hoping there were no more logical ruses tonight. She couldn't imagine what it would be like to just not like heroes, especially if she was being raised by a group of them. It still didn't excuse the kid trying to punch Deku though.

She swallowed some anti-nausea medication that she'd stowed away in her bag and hauled it off the bus, far too tired to use her quirk to make it lighter. She was excited to become stronger, but if today was any indication, she didn't think she was actually looking forward to the rest of the camp.

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 03.19.2021

History

Chapter Summary

Izuku learns a little bit about the past and what his future holds.

Chapter Notes

Art!
TheCatLeader
Kappa
Unhealthily_obsessed
Avroux X
Haruuu
xXJoshOwoXx
Coppery Copper

Memes!
X X X

Izuku was so sore. He hadn't noticed at first because his hunger was a lot more pressing and he'd still been high off of adrenaline and endorphins, but now they were about halfway through dinner and it had hit him like a wall. All he wanted to do was fall over and never wake up. When Ragdoll had told them about the hot springs, the entire class had erupted into cheers so loud that Eraser had had to activate his quirk to get them to shut up. He knew it wouldn't do a lot, especially against the hell that Eraser had planned for tomorrow, but at least it would feel good in the moment.

Kota hadn't stopped glaring at them the entire time. Izuku wanted to say something, but at the same time, their experiences were so fundamentally different that there wasn't really anything he could say. He had spent his entire life wanting to be a hero and being told he couldn't, but Kota didn't even seem to like quirks, based on the way he always glared or rolled his eyes when one of his classmates used theirs. What had even happened to make the kid hate heroes so much?

Izuku frowned as Kota huffed and turned away when Kirishima tried to call out to him and offer him something to eat. How was he supposed to help someone who didn't want to be helped, especially when he didn't really have anything in common with him.

Izuku finished his food and took his bowl to the kitchen, where Tiger

and Mandaly were doing the dishes. Aizawa had hidden away there as well, huddled in the corner looking exhausted, which Izuku thought was extremely unfair considering that he hadn't even had to fight dirt monsters to get there. After handing off his plate to Tiger, Izuku hesitated. It was probably impolite, but Eraser would tell him that it was illogical not to ask questions…

"I can see you thinking from here." Eraser groaned. "Just spit it out already."

Izuku smiled nervously, "Sorry, I was just wondering about Kota. I've never met anyone who hates heroes. Pretty much everyone I know wants to be one."

Tiger placed a comforting hand on Mandalay's shoulder as he responded, "Maybe if he'd had a normal childhood, he would like them, but…" she sighed, "well, his parents were heroes."

"And there's a reason he's living with you instead of them." Aizawa finished, his face softening. "I'm sorry for your loss."

Mandalay smiled sadly, "Thank you, but enough people have told him that his parents died an honorable death that...well, how do you explain to a child that his parents died in the best way a hero can die, protecting people? To him, his parents were dead and everyone was praising them for dying…"

"It was confusing." Izuku nodded. "I can't even imagine...they were the water hose heroes, right? I remember seeing that story of the news."

"If his parents hadn't been heroes, they'd probably still be alive." Aizawa said bluntly. "It's only logical for him to hate them. Even some of our students are too young to really understand that death is a distinct possibility when they choose this career, but for a kid who never even got to choose to take on that risk, heroes must be infuriating."

Mandalay just nodded, "I hope he'll be able to make sense of it a little more when he's a bit older, but for now, there's not much we can do except love him and let him mourn. It's hard."

If Izuku thought they didn't have much in common before, now they were worlds apart. He couldn't even begin to understand what it would be like to have his parents die like that and have everyone praise them instead of acknowledging how terrible the whole thing

was. He frowned, feeling a little helpless, but Mandalay was probably right. Time was probably going to be the only way Kota would be able to heal completely.

“Thank you for answering.” Izuku bowed slightly. “And if there’s anything we students can do…”

“The best thing you kids can do is train hard so you can avoid following in their footsteps.” Tiger said sternly. “Now get outta here, those hot springs aren’t getting any warmer.”

“They aren’t getting any cooler either.” Izuku smiled. “Thanks again. For everything.”

“Of course.” Mandalay smiled. “It’s the least we can do for our future heroes.”

Dabi ran through the plan again and tried to ignore all the crazies around him. Sure, he got a little violent, but Muscular and Moonfish? They just wanted to kill people. No revenge, no motivation to change society, just good old fashioned pain and carnage. He’d met plenty of people like that in his time one the streets and knew not to get too attached, not that there was much risk of that in the first place. Guys like that were always the first to either die or get caught, depending on who they were stupid enough to get in a fight with.

Most of the other recruits were motivated by stain’s ideals though, which was at least something even if they weren’t Dabi’s first choice in co-workers. Then again, Dabi would have much preferred to work alone, so maybe that wasn’t the best wording. Compress was showy, but not half-bad at pickpocketing and sleight of hand, which would come in useful. Big sis Magne was just trying to carve out a place in the world, Spinner was a Stain fanboy, and Twice was batshit insane.

His least favorite “recruit” however, was definitely Mustard. First of all, what villain named themselves after a condiment, even if it was some kind of poison gas? Second of all, the kid was what? Thirteen? Maybe younger? And already making his way into the dregs of society, cast aside and tossed out just like…

Dabi downed the rest of the whisky that Kurogiri had poured for him. It didn’t matter that the kid was the same age as he’d been when he first started living on the streets, it didn’t make him hate him any less. Actually, Dabi was pretty sure it made him hate the kid *more,* because he brought back all those nasty memories from before he’d gotten on

his feet...or, well, as on his feet as he'd ever gotten, but whatever. Fact was that he hated the kid and wanted to avoid him if at all possible, which was easy to do since he'd basically spent his whole time brooding since he'd joined. Joy.

Oh, and to make it even better, he was going to be attacking Shouto's class, a bunch of snot nosed kids. At least it helped him get his revenge, but he wasn't sure how he'd react if somebody ended up kidnapping the brat to try to turn him to villainy. They didn't really have any *specific* objectives, but they'd been told to go after any students that appeared strong, so from the sports festival probably Shouto, that explosion kid, and maybe even that brainwasher if things went well, but they were supposed to try to bring Deku in if they were were able to and kill him if they weren't. Dabi eyed his coworkers, Muscular in particular. Yeah...if he was the one to find the kid, Deku was dead. He or Moonfish would probably say anything, just as an excuse to kill someone, including some bullshit story about how the kid was resisting capture or something. Not that Dabi cared that much either way. As long as he got to help destroy the society his old man cared so much about, he was happy. Hurting his kid brother would just be a bonus.

"Hey, have you guys read the most recent mystery article?" Spinner said suddenly, looking up from his phone. "It's about Stain this time."

"Who cares?" Muscular complained loudly. "The loser was weak enough to get himself captured and he didn't even kill any of those heroes that were coming after him!"

"Have some respect!" Mustard stood up and slammed the table in indignation. "At least he had morals, unlike *some* people I could mention."

"Is that a threat, pipsqueak?" Muscular cracked his knuckles. "You wanna go? Let's see how much that little fart of yours does against two tons of pure muscle!"

Mustard scowled, "It's a powerful poison gas, not a…"

"Was this article for or against the hero killer?" Kurogiri interrupted indulgently. Dabi rolled his eyes. Of course the fog guy would know how to interrupt a fight before it came to blows, having spent so much time with Shigaraki, but he couldn't help but be disappointed. He would have loved to see Muscular tear Mustard apart. Oh, well, he'd just have to let the *heroes* do it instead...or let them be pulled apart,

either was fine.

“Kinda both?” Spinner said, scrolling through the article. “The writer at least has some sense, because he says that Stain’s ideals were sound, but he criticizes the way he went about it.”

“Yeah, because protests are gonna do any good.” Magne scoffed. “He should study history if he thinks any change comes without violence.”

“That’s what *I* said.” Spinner nodded in agreement. “I think the guy is weak, but I liked what he said about actually exposing the crimes of the villains hidden in the system. He kept going on about how Stain made martyrs by killing people instead of publicising their sins, but I don’t see why he couldn’t have done both.”

“We can talk about stupid ideals and convictions later.” Shigaraki scratched his neck as he walked in. “You’re attacking those hero brats in less than 24 hours, so you noobs better be prepared to destroy them, because those stupid heroes are one of the things I *hate* .”

With how exhausted everyone was from their trek through the forest, it was no surprise that they were still yawning and rubbing their eyes when Pixiebob woke them up. Pretty much everyone got out of bed fairly quickly, though, which turned out to be the right decision, because Shinso ended up with ice water dumped over his head courtesy of Aizawa when he refused to get up. Kaminari and the rest of the others who were trying to sleep in were quick to scramble out of their sleeping bags before their teacher could refill the bucket.

Once they were all dressed and fed, Eraser led them out and started handing out tasks to everyone, each personalized to stretch their quirks to the limits. Every task was different, for example, Katsuki was constantly creating massive explosions, Tokoyami was taming Dark Shadow, Uraraka was spinning around in zero gravity, and Shinso was brainwashing whoever needed a break...while his guinea pig was wearing a bracelet that would give them a mild electric shock every few seconds so that he could learn to maintain his control even when his victim experienced pain or other physical stimuli. Overall, Izuku thought the exercises were good, but he might talk to Aizawa about some modifications for tomorrow.

His current worry, however, was not for his classmates, it was for himself. He didn’t have a quirk to train and while he was sure that Eraser would never leave him out, he didn’t know what he was supposed to be doing. One by one, each of his classmates were given

their tasks and just like middle school, Izuku was the last one picked.

When Aizawa got back from setting up Shouji and Hagauke's spar, Izuku swallowed his nervousness and gave him his best teasing smile, "So? What torture do you have for me today, Eraserhead? How are you gonna stretch a quirk that doesn't exist?"

Aizawa gave him a tired glare, "You know there's no point to that. But don't think you can relax just because you don't have a quirk." He grinned. "That just means that you don't get to focus on just one thing like your classmates can. You're going to have to simultaneously train agility, stealth, tracking, and mental flexibility, all while practicing evasion. Of all you students' regimens this week, I tried to make yours the hardest."

"Thanks." Izuku deadpanned. "You set a pretty high bar there, Eraser, so what exactly am I gonna be doing?"

"Well, you can't really *start* until 1B gets here." Aizawa complained. "But I'll explain the basics."

Suddenly, he lobbed something at Izuku's head and he had to catch it before it hit him in the forehead. He glared at Eraser, who just smiled, before looking at the object in his hand. It looked like a marble, but had a dimly blinking light in the middle of the glass along with the number zero. Izuku held it up to the light, but it didn't really seem that special, "Very nice, but what is it?"

Aizawa rolled his eyes, "That's one of your objectives. There's about 100 of those hidden throughout the property. Your job is to find as many as you can without getting caught."

"Caught?" Izuku raised an eyebrow. "Who's going to be chasing me? All of the other hero students are going to be busy with their own quirks."

Izuku didn't think he liked how amused his teacher looked as he responded, "That's why we're waiting for 1B. You're going to be outrunning Vlad King's daughter."

"Vlad King has a daughter?!" Izuku's jaw dropped. "Since when?!"

"Since about six months ago." Aizawa answered. "She's adopted, obviously, but he actually only ended up meeting her because of a recommendation you made on one of Midnight's cases. So just remember, whatever happens, you only have yourself to blame,

problem child."

Izuku looked at Eraserhead in confusion. His recommendation? He'd made a lot of recommendations, but he had no idea how any of them could have ended in someone getting adopted. Should he be nervous? He felt like he should be nervous.

"Speak of the devil, here they are." Eraser grumbled. "Hello Vlad, took you long enough."

"Yeah, well some of us don't make a habit of hazing our classes." Vlad shot back. "But don't think that means we're not gonna go just as hard as any of your students."

Izuku looked over Vlad's class, but he didn't see anyone he didn't recognize. Everyone there was a member of class 1B, so did Vlad's daughter have some sort of quirk to disguise herself or...suddenly Izuku felt someone bowl into him and his eyes widened as he tried to right himself or get the upper hand on his attacker, only to fail completely and end up pinned under a girl a few years older than him.

His captor had blond hair that she wore in two buns and her smile was *literally* sharp as she put her fangs on full display in her excitement, "Hi there! You must be Deku, the one I'm supposed to chase! You're pretty cute, aren't you? I have a feeling we're gonna be best friends!"

Izuku looked at Eraser in a blind panic, but he just snorted, "Deku, meet Himiko Toga, Vlad King's new daughter and your designated pursuer for the day. Good luck. You're gonna need it."

Izuku gulped and looked up at Toga, whose smile now seemed to be even wider. With how easily this girl had pinned him before he even managed to see her, he didn't think all the luck in the world was gonna do him any good. Was it too late to develop a quirk instead?

Evasion

Chapter Summary

Deku tries to stay one step ahead.

Chapter Notes

Art!
Blurry X Starsystem

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku eyed Toga suspiciously, even after she let him get up. He was just supposed to evade her? It *sounded* easy enough, but at the same time, she'd been able to tackle him relatively easily before, so…

"Deku, here's how your exercise is going to work." Eraserhead sounded amused, so Izuku stuck his tongue out at him, but it didn't do any good. "You are going to look for your targets. Each of these little marbles has a tracker inside, you can see them on your phone, but that will only get you so close. For the rest, you'll have to rely on clues from your environment. Toga's weapon of choice is knives. Now, we've taken away her sharp ones, but she'll be trying to *tag* you with the dull ones."

"They look something like this!" Toga brandished a knife in his face, forcing Izuku to take a step back. "They're made out of this blue chalk stuff that's *almost* as pretty as blood when I slash you!"

"B-blood?!" Izuku stuttored. "Um, Eraser, is this safe?"

"Toga's been taught to manage her quirk-enhanced blood lust, so she's not as obsessed as she was before I caught her." Vlad King said. "But be warned that she *is* extremely capable with a knife."

"Ok, blood based quirk." Deku muttered. "Good to know."

"Basically, if Toga manages to tag you with one of her knives, it will leave behind a mark. These will cancel out the targets you find. So if you find 20 trackers before dinner and come back with 27 marks from Toga, you would have negative 7 points." Aizawa said. "And before

you ask, the chalk isn't water-soluble, so you won't be able to wash them off before they're counted. Any questions?"

Izuku's mind raced through the limitations of the exercise, "Is it just marks, or the number of times she finds me? So, if she finds me and slashes me five times one right after the other, would that count as five marks or one?"

"Five!" Toga said proudly. "But that's no fun, so I'll try to only cut you once for every time I find you!"

"Thanks." Izuku dryly. "I really appreciate the effort."

"I'd say take what you can get." Eraser said. "Toga lived on the streets for a while and evaded Midnight for a while before Vlad got on the case, so she's got just as much real world combat experience as you do, if not more. You're going to have to work hard if you want to avoid her."

"I guess that's the point, right." Izuku stretched and got ready to run. "Stretch us to our limits, right? Plus ultra?"

"That's right." Aizawa grinned. "You've got a fifteen minute head-start. I suggest you use it wisely. Go!"

Izuku ran through the forest. He wasn't quite sure whether it was smarter to pace himself, since he'd be running all day, or try to find as many targets as he could before Toga caught up with him. He also had to keep in mind that Toga would be tracking him, so he couldn't just crash through the forest, otherwise he'd be too easy to follow. Eraser sure did want to keep him on his toes today, huh?

He glanced at his phone. There were several targets close by, so he chose one and ran toward it. He ended up in a clearing, with no marbles in sight, but his phone said he'd reached the location and wouldn't zoom in anymore. Izuku squinted and looked more closely at his surroundings. There didn't appear to be anything out of place...except that pile of grass clippings in an area where no one should be mowing the grass!

He ran up to the pile and scuffed it lightly with his foot. Sure enough, he saw the tell-tale blinking of his target and bent down to pick it up. That hadn't been hard at all! Even with a former villain chasing him, he could do this!

Izuku smiled and ran off toward his next target. What had he even been worried about?

When Aizawa waved her over, Ochako gratefully released her quirk and wiped at her mouth. It was hard enough activating her quirk on herself, but keeping it activated while spinning in a hamster ball was pushing her more than she'd anticipated. It was necessary to be a hero, so she'd do it, but that didn't mean that it didn't suck.

She didn't recognize the girl standing next to Aizawa, but she seemed nice enough, and she was certainly excited if the way that she practically bowled Ochako over in greeting was any indication, "Hello! I'm Toga! It's nice to meet you!"

"Um, hi?" Ochako looked to Aizawa, who just huffed tiredly.

"This is Vlad's daughter." He explained. "She's helping with some of the trainings."

"Oh, cool!" Ochako smiled. "It's nice to meet you, I'm Ochako Uraraka!"

"We're going around to each of your classmates and seeing if you'd be willing to give Toga a few ounces of your blood." Aizawa said. "She needs it to activate her quirk and it'll help her train you all more effectively."

"O..ok?" Uraraka said. "Um, I guess that's not the weirdest quirk activation I've heard of. Stain's quirk activated the same way, right?"

"Mmhmm!" Toga nodded. "But my quirk doesn't affect the person I take the blood from, just me! Are you willing to help me out, pretty please?!?!?!"

She looked at Ochako with the biggest puppy-dog eyes she'd ever seen, which made Ochako giggle, "Ok, ok! No need to pout like that! So, uh, how do you do this? Do you have a needle or…?"

Toga nodded excitedly. "Yep! Vlad gave me all these needles and they're even sterile and everything! This'll only take a second!"

Toga grabbed her arm and within seconds and apparently found the vein she wanted. Ochako didn't even have a chance to be scared of the needle or anything before Toga had stuck it in her arm and attached a vial to catch the blood. Three vials later, she took out the needle and

grinned at Ochako, “Oh, this is gonna be so much fun! Thank you so much, Ochako!”

She bounded off before Ochako could say anything else and for the first time she noticed that the belt Toga was wearing was absolutely covered with different plastic vials. Most were empty, but a good number of them were already filled with blood. She turned to Aizawa, “So, she’s really getting samples from everyone?”

Aizawa shrugged, “Everyone willing. Excuse me, I have to go before she tries to tell Tokoyami that his blood tastes like a dead bird.”

He hurried off and Ochako blinked a few times before shaking her head and going back to her training. She had a lot of work to do if she wanted to keep up with the rest of the class.

Izuku heard the snap of a twig behind him and immediately dodged to the side just in time to avoid Toga’s knife. She pouted at him as he fell into a fighting stance, “Aww, you’re too fast! I was hoping to see you covered in my cuts!”

“Well then, you’re gonna have to do better.” Izuku challenged. “I’ve already found three targets.”

“Ooh! That’s so fun!” Toga grinned. “Alright then! This was a practice round, but if you want me to pull out the big guns, I’m ready! See you soon, Deku!”

She bounded off into the trees and Izuku watched her leave suspiciously before grabbing the target he’d been after and running off in the opposite direction. He’d heard her coming, so he shouldn’t have too many problems avoiding her, but there was something about her *next time* that rubbed him the wrong way. She was acting like she knew something he didn’t, which was 100% true. Izuku still didn’t know her quirk.

Shouta watched his class and sighed. He was mostly here to make sure the kids were taking breaks and didn’t accidentally kill themselves, but for now, that just meant that he was kind of bored and his mind kept wandering back to the text Deku had sent him sometime in the middle of the night when he *should* have been sleeping instead of worrying about everyone else around him.

Hey Eraser, I know it’s late, but I was wondering, if you have time this

week sometime, would you consider taking to Kota? I doubt he would listen to me at all, but I know you've lost people to heroism too. I'm sorry if that's pushing too far, you don't have to do anything if you don't want to , but I was just thinking that you're familiar with a lot of the darker aspects of heroism that people don't talk about and you might be able to get through to him and maybe give him a healthier perspective on thing? Sorry, I'll go to bed now.

It was just like the kid to text a novel like that and try to meddle while also making logical points and apologizing. He had to admit that Deku *did* have a point. Everyone else that Kota had talked to probably put heroes up on a pedestal and only talked about the good parts, which he'd obviously learned through experience weren't everything. Kota probably could benefit from talking to someone who was willing to acknowledge both the good and the bad of the heroics industry, but Shouta shouldn't be that person. He wasn't good with kids.

Absentmindedly, he pulled out his phone.

Group chat

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

Hey, after the training camp is over, there's this kid one of you should talk to. Not one of the students, just a kid who's seen too much of the bad side of the hero industry. He could probably use a shoulder to lean on.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

And you're not doing it...why?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

I'm not good with kids.

Several people are typing

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

You're joking right?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Shou, I am literally so disappointed in you right now.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Wait, he wasn't saying that just to be funny?

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

I look like a hobo and have the personality of decaf coffee. What about that screams *children like me?*

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

I'm sorry to break it to you, Eraser, but you are *literally* a teacher.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

What's your point.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

You wouldn't be such a good teacher if you weren't good with kids, you idiot.

12579: *(Eraserhead)*

I'm a good teacher because I don't take it easy on them. I treat the students the same way I'd treat anyone.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

Exactly.

Shouta rolled his eyes and stuck his phone back in his pocket as he heard Tokoyami's yelling get a little more panicked. No matter what the others said, he wasn't good with kids...but maybe Kota was sick of being treated like a little kid anyway.

Izuku stopped at a river to cool down for a minute, splashing cool water on his face and letting it drip down his neck. Toga was keeping him on his toes so far, which was good, even if it was exhausting, but he'd managed to find ten targets and didn't have a single mark so far, so that was good.

He heard someone crashing through the brush behind him and he jumped to his feet, even though he knew Toga was a lot quieter than that. He relaxed a little when he realized it was just Kacchan, "Hey Kacchan! Are you taking a break or did Eraser change your training?"

"The hobo told me to go *cool down,* whatever that means." Kacchan huffed. "What about you?"

"I'm training right now." Izuku shrugged. "But if you see any knife-happy blonds, let me know."

Kacchan rolled his eyes, "Sure thing, Izuku."

Izuku froze.

"Izuku, you good?" Kacchan looked concerned, which only made the alarms in Izuku's head blare louder. "Is something wrong?"

"You…" Izuku looked at him. He *looked* like Kacchan, even down to the scowl lines on his face, but it was just *wrong* somehow. "You're not Kacchan."

Suddenly, Kacchan's face morphed into a wide grin that looked completely unnatural on his face and before Izuku could recover from *that* mental image, there was a flash of blue. Izuku cried and stumbled back, a blue slash mark cutting across his chest. He looked up in shock, but Kacchan was still there, *pouting* as he played with the

knife.

“Aww, that’s no fun, Deku-kun.” Kacchan whined. “What gave me away?”

“Kacchan never calls me Izuku.” Izuku said, tense. “He’s called me Deku since we were kids.”

“Aw, so I *did* guess wrong.” Kacchan’s face started melting away, which was somehow less creepy than him grinning or pouting. “Eraser told me you two were childhood friends, so I thought it’s be dumb for him to call you by your hero name!”

Kacchan finished melting away and Izuku hurried to look at the ground as he turned bright red, “T-toga! Are you naked?!?!”

Toga laughed, “My transformation includes clothes, so wearing my own on top would just be weird!”

“I think this is weird too.” Izuku gulped. “Um, I, uh, I’m just gonna go…”

“Ok!” Toga sounded excited. “Catch you again soon, Deku! Hmm, I wonder who I should be next time?”

Izuku ran, trying to not think too hard about *anything* besides his next objective. Seeing Kacchan like that...and she could be anyone! He made a mental note to yell at Eraser next time he saw him. A little heads up would have been nice.

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 03.31.2021

Stupid

Chapter Summary

The training camp continues!

Chapter Notes

Art!
Die_Bien

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Ochako was more exhausted than she'd ever been, but it was a good feeling. Sure, she'd thrown up more times in the past 24 hours than she had in the past three years, but it would all be worth it. Already, she felt like she was able to stay weightless a little longer than she could before, so after an entire week of this, she'd be so much stronger! Still, she collapsed gratefully on one of the benches and slowly sipped on a ginger ale as the rest of her classmates trickled in. All of them were in various stages of exhaustion. Even after just a quick glance around the room, She could see Bakugo rubbing his wrists, Kaminari staring vacantly off into space, and Momo looking noticeably thinner than she had this morning. She took another tired sip, her eyes widening slightly when Deku staggered through the door.

He looked noticeably worse for wear and both his clothes and his skin were absolutely covered with both drying mud and multiple blue slashes. From the way the mud was smeared across his arms, it looked like Deku had tried to wipe some of it off before dinner, but had only succeeded in rubbing it around and so had given up halfway through. She couldn't help giggling at the cute mental image, but made sure to get herself under control before waving him over, "Hey Deku! Over here!"

Deku froze and slowly turned to face her, eyeing her suspiciously, "Hi…"

Ochako frowned. Had she done something wrong? She'd thought they were friends, just in general, but especially after the bus. Had she been wrong about that? She was so confused, "Deku? Is something wrong?"

“Why don’t you tell me?” Izuku’s eyes were flicking over her rapidly, taking in every detail and despite how tired she was Ochako probably would have blushed if it didn’t look like he was searching for a weapon. “Where’s the knife?”

“T-the what?” Ochako just looked at him. “Deku, are you feeling ok?”

“I’m way too tired for this.” Deku sobbed. “Stop playing games! Either stab me or let me sleep!”

“Deku!” Ochako rushed to his side, only half surprised when he stumbled backwards away from her, falling into the floor as he tripped over a box of vegetables. “What are you even talking about? Are you ok?”

“Oh! Deku-kun! You made it back before me! Cool!”

Ochako froze as she watched *herself* walk in the door with a spring in her step that the real her was currently too exhausted to muster. The doppelganger was identical to her in every way, she was even wearing the same outfit as Ochako was, although the fake’s was a lot cleaner. Deku took a moment to look between the two of them, then promptly burst into tears.

“Deku?!” Ochako crouched down and tried to comfort him, but he just scooted away from her into the corner. “What’s going on?”

“Oi! Deku!” Bakugo growled. “What the fuck are you crying about?”

They had attracted the attention of most of the class by this point, but Deku’s tears were more exhausted than real distress, like he would usually stop crying, but was just too exhausted to care anymore, “One of them is real and the other’s going to try and stab me and I don’t know which is which!”

“Tch.” Bakugo growled. “You always were a damn nerd, *Izuku* .”

The entire class froze and even Deku was shocked enough to stop crying. There was a long moment of shocked silence before the other Ochako started cackling, “That’s exactly what gave me away this morning! How did you know?!”

“Nerd’s predictable.” Bakguo snorted. “Oh, and that one’s the real one.”

He pointed to Ochako like she was an afterthought and Izuku’s

shoulders slumped in relief, “Sorry, Uraraka...I’m really tired.”

“I...I figured.” Ochako said, still trying to process everything as she turned to the other her. “Uh...hi?”

“Hi cutie!” The other her smiled widely. “I guess I should probably change huh?”

“At least put on some clothes.” Izuku groaned. “We’re in the kitchen for goodness sake!”

The other Ochako pouted, but grabbed something from a bag she’d brought with her, “You’re no fun, Deku-kun.”

“You had that the whole time?!” Deku looked exasperated.

The other Ochako shrugged, wrapping the robe around her shoulders, “Of course, I did, Deku-kun, I’m not a heathen!”

Ochako almost threw up again as she watched her own face melt away into a weird goop until the only thing left was Toga, who was wearing nothing but a bathrobe. Maybe she should talk to Aizawa? Her quirk’s side effects had obviously extended beyond her stomach and were now affecting her brain. Maybe Kaminari would have some advice?

“Stop teasing Deku, Bakubro.” Kirishima came up and put a hand around Izuku’s shoulder. “If you’d had to run away from dopplegangers of your classmates all day, I’m sure you’d be exhausted too, so just because Deku...”

“For your information, Shitty Hair, I would tease any of these stupid extas, not just Deku.” Bakugo grinned. “But seriously, there were two Ururakas right in front of him! It was easy to tell that I was just messing with him!”

“Speaking of…” Ochako said faintly, “ *Why* were there two of me?”

“Himiko’s quirk allows her to transform into anyone after she drinks their blood.” Vlad King said, walking up behind them. “Since I didn’t want to leave her alone for the whole week, Aizawa suggested putting her to work helping train you kids.”

“Oh…” Ochako looked at Deku and suddenly the blue slashes and the weird behavior made a lot more sense. Toga had probably transformed into all of them at some point during the day, so no

wonder he was so paranoid!

“Can we just eat now?” Deku had stopped crying, but he had apparently given up on standing and was just lying on the floor defeated.

Shinso had apparently decided that was a great idea and was lying down next to him, “I second that notion. I’m starving.”

“Sure, you can eat.” Aizawa walked into the room carrying a box of vegetables, plopping it down on the table with a thud. “But remember what the pusycats said last night. You’re cooking it yourself.”

His students were definitely better at fighting than they were cooking. The curry was...well, it was passable, but Shouta was still considering asking Lunch Rush to give some guest lectures, if only so the brats didn’t accidently give themselves food poisoning when they graduated and started living on their own. It was a hearty meal though, which was necessary after everything he’d put them through today.

The kids were improving enough that they might actually stand a chance if they had to fight the league again, not that they’d done too shabby the last time. The leadership and maturity they’d shown when they ran into Shigaraki at the mall was beyond impressive and the media still hadn’t stopped singing the kids’ praises, so hopefully a little bit of intensive training would pull double duty to help them get stronger and keep their heads from getting too big. The last thing he needed was overconfident problem children bragging as much as 1B thought they did.

Speaking of problem children, Shouta couldn’t help but notice Kouta slip out of the kitchen without eating. He was most likely just trying to avoid the hero students, but still, it wasn’t healthy to go without eating. Ok, maybe Shouta wasn’t one to talk, but he was an adult, he could get away with a few unhealthy habits here and there, Kouta couldn’t.

Shouta sighed when Deku caught his eye from across the room and gave him a meaningful look, glancing toward the door Kouta had just walked through. He wasn’t good with kids, no matter what Joke and the others said. Still, *somebody* had to make sure the kid ate, and his students were too preoccupied to do it. Even Deku, who *had* noticed Kouta slip out, was too busy being paranoid of his classmates, which was hilarious and excellent payback for the whole pajama stunt, to take care of one little kid.

Shouta groaned and stood up, filling an extra plate with curry and silently slipping out into the woods. This property was probably excellent for a kid like Kouta who wanted to be alone. There were lots of nooks and crannies to explore and with the pussycats around it was mostly safe for him to treat the entire property as his backyard. Honestly, Shouta himself probably would have had a blast here as a kid, not to mention if the three stooges had gotten to let loose here back in high school.

He shook his head to clear away the bittersweet memories. He still missed Shirakumo, no matter how long it had been, and he knew Mic did too. That was why Deku thought he'd be a good fit to talk to Kouta, despite how rough around the edges Shouta was. The stories about heroes that they told to children were like fairy tales, but Shouta had learned the hard way, as had Kouta, that heroism didn't always have happy endings.

The kid was easy to track, unconcerned with being followed, which was probably age appropriate, even if Shouta's first instinct was to immediately harp on the lack of situational awareness. Between his footprints and the clear path that had been cut through the forest, it was obvious that wherever the kid was, he came here often. He probably even called it his secret hideout or something.

He found the kid sitting on a cliff, "You have good taste, kid. There's a nice view here."

Kouta jumped up with a yelp, surprise quickly morphing into anger when he saw Shouta, "Stupid hero! How did you find my secret hideout?!"

Shotua snorted, "If you don't want people to find it, vary the path you take everytime. Consistency is dangerous. It makes you easy to track."

Kouta gave him an appraising look, but didn't say anything. Shouta rolled his eyes and set the food on the ground before sitting down on the edge of the cliff.

"The kids made curry." He said, looking out over the forest. "It's terrible, but it's better than going hungry."

"I don't want any food made by stupid heroes!" Kouta said, flinching when his stomach growled loudly.

Shouta just raised an eyebrow, "Like I said, better than going hungry."

Kouta glared at him for a few seconds, but the smell of the food got to him eventually and he sat down and grumpily devoured the curry. Shouta hid a smirk in his capture weapon. Apparently there *were* limits to how much the kid hated heroes.

When Kouta finished, he put down the bowl and started glaring at him again, “What are you still doing here?”

Shouta shrugged, “Like I said, it’s a nice view.”

“No.” Kouta pouted. “You’re probably here to get me to like heroes or something stupid like that. Did my aunt make you come here?”

Shouta gave him a look, “Do you really think anyone could *make* me do something I didn’t want to do?”

Kouta shuffled awkwardly under his gaze and when he didn’t respond, Shouta continued, “And I’m not gonna force you to like the hero's kid. We both know it’d be pointless anyway, so why bother? Heroism hurt you and took away your parents. You have every right to be mad about that.”

The poor kid looked genuinely shocked, “You...you don’t think it’s bad that I hate heroes?”

Shouta turned to look at the kid more closely. He seemed almost *hopeful* for some reason, which just made Shouta angry. In a world of kids who idolized heroes, of course one who hated them would feel broken and left out. It wasn’t fair, but that was life, wasn’t it?

“I think you have a lot of sadness and anger going on in that little body of yours and it would be illogical to think it would all just go away.” Shouta said finally. “Heroes are an easy target, that’s fine. There's a lot of people in this world who don’t like heroes. As long as you don’t get carried away and let that anger make you hurt people, it’s not bad that it exists.”

Kouta winced, “Are you saying I should apologize for trying to punch that stupid broccoli kid?”

Shouta snorted. He’d definitely be sharing that nickname in the group chat, “You *can,* but honestly, Deku can handle it. Just don’t do it again, alright?”

Kouta nodded. He seemed contrite, but he still probably didn’t have the tools he needed to deal with all the hatred and anger that had

been coming to a head for years now. Shouta couldn't really give him that, but at least he could let the kid know he wasn't alone.

Shouta sighed, "It makes sense for you to be mad, kid. I lost someone to heroism too and I'm *still* angry about it sometimes. You're really not the only one."

Kouta looked at him suspiciously, "You're lying. If you lost someone because they were a hero, then why are you a stupid hero too?"

"Because I want to keep people safe." Shouta said. "I don't want people to die, but that means that I sometimes take the danger that was meant for them. It sucks, it's hard, and maybe there's better ways to do that, I don't know, but I do it."

"That's stupid." Kouta huffed.

"Yep." Shouta ruffled the kid's hair as he stood. "But that's life. It's all just one big stupid thing after another and we all just have to deal with it. Remember to take that plate back to the kitchen, I'm sure your aunt doesn't want her dishware scattered all over the forest."

He didn't look back as he retreated silently back into the woods, but he could feel Kouta watching him leave. He had no idea if he'd gotten through to the kid. He probably hadn't, but he'd tried and the kid had eaten, so that would have to be enough. Shouta groaned as he realized he now had to get back to his *own* problem children. With his luck, they'd probably blown something up by now. Yep, life was definitely really stupid.

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 04.06.2021

Courage

Chapter Summary

The test of courage begins.

Chapter Notes

Well, it's official, this fic has over 1 million hits. I remember when I was freaking out over it reaching 10,000, because that felt like such an unacheivable goal at the time. You all are so amazing and I am thankful to all of you for reading along and listening my story.

Art!
Die_Bienne X
The cat leader X X
Zanchev
Mae

Memes!
X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

By the time Izuku dragged himself to dinner at the end of the second day of training, he was smiling. Sure, Toga was still a challenging opponent, but he was getting better and unlike yesterday, he had actually gotten a positive amount of points! By his count, there were still a handful of targets left in the woods and he'd wanted to find them today, but he'd run out of time before the Mandalay had called them all in for dinner. It wasn't a *huge* deal, he knew where they all were and it'd be easy to find them in the morning, but he'd wanted to prove that he could, not only to Eraser, but to himself.

It was easy to push aside his annoyance when everyone was so excited though and Izuku would be lying if he said he wasn't excited too. After two whole days in these woods, he knew all the best places for an ambush and even if it hadn't been confirmed, he knew Toga probably wouldn't miss a chance to mess with the students, which meant that he was already a leg up as both a runner and as a scarer. Even if he didn't win, however, it was sure to be a fun night.

He and the rest of 1A winced sympathetically as Eraserhead dragged the remedial students away. It probably would have been good

training to have them join in the exercise as well, but Izuku understood that there had to be *some* consequences, especially with all the logical ruses Eraser tended to pull. That meant that there were only fourteen students left to participate, though, so they'd have to work hard if they wanted to beat class 1B.

The pussycats gave their opening explanation and Tiger grinned savagely at them, "Class 1B will take the first turn as scarers. The winners are the ones who make the most people piss their pants!"

Izuku nodded and went to stand by Kouda, his assigned partner for the exercise. They watched their opponents disappear into the woods and Izuku could see Kouda getting more and more nervous, so he gave him a small smile, "Hey, it's alright! There's a lot of animals around here, so you can always send them ahead to warn us of any traps. This'll be a piece of cake!"

Kouta nodded frantically and he started shaking marginally less, so Izuku was just gonna count that as a win. It was almost a shame that Eraser wasn't participating, considering how much he loved scaring them all on a daily basis anyway.

Toga giggled and blew them all kisses as she ran off into the woods, "Good luck cuties! See you later!"

"Oh wonderful." Jiro said. "We're gonna have to run from ourselves, aren't we?"

"I guess so." Yaoyorozu frowned. "But, mean, running from yourself should be easy, right? I mean, you know obviously know that you're the real you."

"Still gonna be trippy though." Bakugo pointed out. "Now come on and let's get started already! The sooner we all get back, the sooner we get the scare the shit outta those 1B losers."

Izuku rolled his eyes and waited with significantly more patience as the first team entered the woods. This was gonna be fun.

Dabi looked out over the woods, smirking as he relished the peace that they were here to destroy. Behind him, the rest of the vanguard action squad began putting on their masks, already anxious to go cause chaos as soon as Dabi gave the go ahead. He was the one in charge here, the one with all the power and he loved it. So what if his old man hadn't thought he had what it took to be a leader? Here he

was, proving him wrong in the best way possible. Maybe he should give Shouto another scar while he was here? May as well go for a matching set and make the kid's face symmetrical.

"How much longer?" Muscular complained. "I wanna see some blood!"

Dabi was tempted to make him wait a little longer, just to make sure he remembered who was in charge, but the sun was already down and they were wasting time, "Ketchup, go on ahead and start up the gas."

"It's Mustard." The brat muttered. "And it's a poison, not a condiment."

"Yeah, whatever, Relish." Dabi smirked. "Just make sure those kids don't have anywhere to run."

Mustard nodded and headed into the woods as Dabi lit the nearest tree on fire and turned to the rest of the league, "Spread out and attack whoever you find. Let's show these hero brats the other side of the coin."

Izuku saw Pixiebob sniffing the air and did the same. He hadn't come across that scent before while he was here, and he couldn't help but be grateful. It was terrible, like a cross between rotten eggs and something burning. Pixiebob didn't seem to like it better.

"Hey, Tiger, you smell that?" She asked. "Is something burning?"

"It could be a fire on the mountain." Ojiro suggested. "Is it wildfire season?"

"No." Mandalay answered. "It's not."

They all whirled around when they heard Pixiebob yelp, but there was nothing they could do as she was pulled backward and pinned under the giant weapon of someone who wasn't supposed to be there. Izuku recognized Magne from some police reports he'd been given, but he couldn't think of a single *good* reason why she would be here, especially not with someone else holding a giant sword standing right next to her. The guy with a sword had a lizard mutation quirk and Izuku's brain rushed to find their weaknesses as the villain started talking, "Tonight, Stain's will will be carried out. We are the vanguard action squad, and I hope for your sake that you are true heroes."

“Everyone! We were attacked by two enemies and there might be more on the way! Return to camp and regroup! Do not engage the villains!”

Shouta was filled with a sense of dread as Mandalay's telepath echoed through their heads. At least two villains, but of course, no one would be stupid enough to attack a group of heroes and hero students with only two people.

“Vlad, stay here.” He ordered as he ran out the door. “I’ll take care of the other students.”

If this was a full scale attack then they were in big trouble. They had limited the number of heroes under the assumption that it would ensure the camp’s secrecy, but now it seemed like they’d just shot themselves in the foot. Depending on the number of enemies, they might not have any choice but to authorize the students to fight back.

“It seems your concern has you distracted, Eraserhead.”

Shouta barely had time to react before a wall of flame was coming his way. He managed to dodge, barely, and growled under his breath. He didn’t have time for this. He had students to save!

As soon as the flames were gone, shouta activated his quirk and launched a kick at the villain, who looked like he’d been stitched together by a really bad seamstress. The guy looked skinny, but he was quick and dodged Shouta’s attack with only minor difficulty.

“You should just give up, Eraserhead.” Patchwork said. “We’re not after you.”

“That means you're after the students.” Shouta accused, shooting out his capture weapon. “I won’t let you hurt them!”

“What a *hero.* ” the villain sneered. “What, do you want a medal or something? You see, this is why we’re here: to knock down a few pedestals!”

A gunshot echoed through the clearing and the flame user hissed and started dissolving into grey goop, “Son of a bitch! No wonder Shigaraki wants him…”

His mouth disappeared before he could finish his sentence and Shouta forced himself to look away. Deku stood with a group of other students near the entrance to the woods, gun smoking in his hand as he stared in horror at what *used* to be the villain.

“That, uh…” Deku gulped. “That was some sort of copy quirk, right?”

“Yeah, must be.” Shouta nodded. “Your bullets aren’t enough to kill anyone. How did you even get your gun?”

“I hid a few weapons throughout the woods to help me fight off Toga.” Deku answered. “I had Yaoyorozu make me some more bullets too. I know the cpussycats ordered us not to fight, but, uh...”

“But you picked it up just in case.” Shouta said. “Good work, kid. Get the rest of the students ins…”

Has anyone seen Kota?! I already told him to come back, but I’m not sure where he goes when he’s in the woods!

They both froze at Mandalay’s message before Deku turned to him, face grim as he cocked his gun, “Go. I’ll handle things here.”

Shouta shook his head, “Vlad can…”

“Vlad can go help the students still trapped in the woods and we can barricade ourselves here.” Deku answered. “We’ll get inside and keep fighting to a minimum, I promise. Now go, you’re wasting time!”

Shouta wanted to argue, he really did, but the problem child had a point. Out of all the students, less than a dozen had returned to camp so far,which meant that most of them were still out in the woods facing who knew how many villains and Shouta wouldn’t be able to help them until he knew Kota was safe. They couldn’t afford to leave the most defenceless students on their own and if the kids stayed inside, they would have at least one layer of defense.

“You are authorized to use your quirks only in defense of the building.” Shouta said gravely, making sure to make eye contact with every student in his line of sight. “Do not enter the woods and do not go after the villains. Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes, sensei!”

“Good.” Shouta huffed and started running. Deku and the others would get the message to Vlad and if all went optimally, every student that made it back to camp would be able to bolster its defenses. He could only hope that he’d made the right decision as he ran faster toward the place he’d seen Kota hiding the night before.

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 04.12.2021

So, I frequently get people who say that I am going to be updating on their birthday and that my chapter is one of their birthday presents, but this time, the next update is actually on *my* birthday! How cool is that?

Limits

Chapter Summary

The summer camp attack continues.

Chapter Notes

Tell me Happy Birthday so I can act like I have friends!

Art!
FidgetW
That's so Yikes
TaziyaKoya

Memes!
X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shouta didn't pass any of his students as he raced through the forest towards Kota's hideout, so he could only hope that they were following Mandaly's instruction to return to the base. He didn't know if the villains would be able to find the kid, but he didn't trust the cliffs to be enough to protect him, not if the flame user was any indication of these enemies' strength, which meant that he needed to get there as quickly as possible.

"Show me your blood!"

It was only years of combat training that kept him from freezing when he finally pulled himself up onto the cliff. Muscular, the same villain that had killed the kid's parents had Kota backed against the wall, completely at his mercy as his muscles swelled larger and larger to the point where his shadow completely covered the kid. Without thinking, Shouta activated his quirk and Muscular immediately began to deflate.

"What?!" Muscular turned slowly, smiling at Shouta, who stood his ground. "Oh, it looks like Eraserhead's joined our little playdate, how fun. So what now? Dusty said you can only go so long without blinking, right? I'm fast enough that the blink of an eye is more than enough time to get a kill in, no problem! It's a pity I won't be able to savor it, but that's life, I guess. The only question is who should I kill first, you or the kid?"

“You won’t get the chance to do either.” Shouta snarled. “Kid, run.”

“But…” Kota looked between them. “But, Mr. Eraserhead. He’ll kill you!”

“I’ll be fine.” Shouta said seriously. “Remember, it’s my job to be in danger. Now go.”

The kid hesitated for one more stupid moment, then started running, tears streaming down his face. Shouta could only hope that he had enough sense to go straight back to camp, but he was a smart kid, so he should be able to figure it out. Shouta couldn’t afford to be distracted by that at the moment, not with a dangerous villain in front of him ready to smash his head in.

The only reason Muscular hadn’t gone after Kota immediately was because with his quirk erased, he was too slow to outrun his opponent. So instead, he kept Shouta in his sights, clenching and unclenching his hands as he waited for the moment Shouta had to blink. Shouta wasn’t stupid, he knew that if Muscular had even half a chance to grow his muscles and attack, there was no way he would survive, so there was no other option. He had to end this quickly.

He shot a quick gaze toward the direction the kid had run, then visibly panicked “Kid! I thought I told you to run away?! Get out of here!”

Muscular grinned, “Ha! You shoulda listened to the hero, kid. I’m so excited to see your...what? Where’d he go?!”

He was knocked to the floor by a kick to the head and Shouta smirked as his opponent went down, “Logical ruse.”

He didn’t give Muscular a chance to get his footing as he wrapped him in his capture weapon, “That’s the thing about strength quirks. You’re all so used to punching your way through your problems, you never think to look out for being tricked.”

Shouta could feel his eyes starting to burn, so he put his entire weight into it as he whipped his capture weapon around until Muscular hit the cliff wall with a heavy thud. He sighed in relief as he felt him go limp, but was still wary until he stepped closer and made sure the villain was unconscious, “One down...who knows how many to go. Wonderful.”

Ochako rolled again and hissed as one of the knives sliced her cheek open. How were there even this many?! And how was the guy even able to see them when that stupid straightjacket was covering his eyes?! How was that thing even functional?!

“Ochako, you ok?” Tsu panted. She was somewhere, trying to hide among the leaves, but Ochako was too busy running to figure out where.

“I’m fine.” Ochako spat, wiping the blood away with the back of her hand. “We need to get out of here.”

“He’ll follow us and we don’t have permission to fight back.” Tsu pointed out. “Do you think we can lead him to Aizawa before he…you know?”

Chills ran down her spine as the villain started muttering again, “Flesh…blood…so good…hungry…need flesh.”

Ochako gulped, “I sure hope so.”

She took a deep breath and started running. Blades crashed down around her and she scrambled desperately away, trying to maintain some sort of true course while not being speared through by some freaky guy’s knife teeth. She let out a crazed giggle as she realized this situation had the same ridiculous energy as running away from a killer clown in a dream, except that she was pretty darn sure that she wasn’t sleeping right now.

She heard Tsu let out a yelp behind her and before she could think better of it, she had stopped and whirled around, “Tsu!”

Tsu was pinned to a tree by her hair, eyes wide as more knives whistled through the air toward her. Ochako ran towards the villain, knowing she wouldn’t be able to reach him before his blades reached Tsu, not that floating him would probably do much good anyway. She was going to watch her friend die and there was nothing she could do about it.

The first knife to hit the tree, however, wasn’t one of Moonfish’s. The blade hit the tree sideways and dug into the wood above Tsu’s head, cutting through just enough of her hair that she was able to pull away and roll to the ground a split second before the tree turned into a pincushion.

Ochako whirled around to face the direction the knife had been

thrown from to see Toga coming toward them with an angry pout on her face as she twirled another knife in her hands, “Sorry about the haircut Tsu-chan, but no hair is way cuter than with no head. And I think you’ll look super-duper cute with short hair anyway.”

“Thanks.” Tsu nodded. “I appreciate the save.”

“No! My sweet flesh! Robbed!” Moonfish was getting agitated and they all ran for cover as his blades started going crazy. “Blood! Flesh! Hungry! Now!”

“I know they say use your words, but I’d think I’d prefer if you shut up.” Toga blocked one of his blades with her knife. “And you’re stealing my knife thing! Totally not cute!”

“Toga! Watch out!” Ochako shouted. “On your left!”

Toga dodged just in time, and Ochako swore as she realized they couldn’t let Toga fight this guy on her own, “Hey knife face! Get some dental work!”

She ran out from the tree she was hiding behind and flung a weightless branch at him, returning the gravity right as it hit him in the face. It wasn’t nearly enough to hurt him, but it did throw him off for long enough for Toga to grab one of her blood vials and drink a few drops from one. When Moonfish recovered, it was to the sight of two Ochakos staring him down. He hesitated, probably wondering if the branch had hit him harder than he thought. It wasn’t much, but it was more than they’d gotten so far, so Ochako wasn’t going to look a gift horse in the mouth. Actually, she was pretty sure she wouldn’t be looking *anything* in the mouth after this fight.

Tsu came up behind them, “If we can confuse him enough, we might actually stand a chance.”

“Perfect.” Toga gave a grin that looked really creepy on Ochako’s face. “Scatter!”

They all ran in different directions. Ochako grabbed whatever she could get her hands on and pelted Moonfish with as many weightless rocks as she could while Tsu tried to trip him with her tongue and spat mucus at the knives on the offchange he would be able to feel it. Toga covered both of them by perrying his attacks while changing as often as she was able. Even with all of their efforts, though, they were still losing. Badly.

“Any chance we can just run again?” Ochako panted, wincing as one of Moonfish’s knives grazed her arm. “Would he even let us?”

“No dice.” Toga was currently halfway morphed between Bakugo and Shiozaki, which was a really trippy nightmare image. “He’s boxing us in.”

“I was hoping I was just imaging the fighting area getting smaller.” Tsu croaked, her hair flying everywhere as she tried to dodge another hit, only to hiss as she ended up with a deep cut on her thigh. “What are we gonna do?”

Toga fully shifted into Bakugo and her face was full of determination as she stared down the villain, “What we have to. Get back to camp, cutie-pies, I got this.”

“Wait!” Ochako reached out to her, but Toga charged before she could do everything. Knives flashed faster than she could even process, but Moonfish still had the upper hand...or mouth, considering that he had more teeth than Toga had hands. Even while he was busy fending off her attacks, he was still able to send potentially lethal attacks toward her and Tsu and they were starting to slow down from pain, exhaustion and blood loss. Ochako felt bile rise up in her throat as she realized they weren’t going to last much longer.

Suddenly, there was a loud explosion and Moonfish’s knives faltered. Ochako looked around for the real Bakugo, but all she could see was Toga disguised as him drenched in her own blood as she stared down at Bakugo’s hands in shock, Moonfish smoking on the ground in front of her.

“Did you…?” Tsu gulped. “Did you just use Bakugo’s quirk.”

Toga nodded numbly, “uh-huh…”

Ochako didn’t know what to say, “Oh...has that ever happened before?”

Toga couldn’t look away from her hands, “Nope.”

“Oh.” Ochako repeated. “Cool.”

“Uh, guys?” Tsu interrupted. “He’s getting up.”

“Alright, then, time for this fight to really begin.” Toga shifted into a fighting stance and gave her most Bakugo-like grin, small pops

echoing from her palms. “You’re right, Ochako-chan! This *is* pretty cool!”

Izuku nervously checked his gun again as he waited for any of the villains to arrive. Vlad King had already sent a handful of class 1B students their way, so they had a good team and were working to get everything secure before the villains arrived. Tsubasa had created an invisible wall of air around the entire entrance and only he knew where the hole was so newly arriving students could get inside. Monoma had copied Sero’s quirk and they were currently taping shut most of the doors and windows while Kouda sent out teams of squirrels and birds to warn them when the villains got too close, not that they’d be able to make it through Shiozaki’s forest of vines without alerting them. He had no way of knowing if it would be enough, but the more students Vlad King and the Pussycats sent their way, the more their defenses would increase, so it would have to be enough.

Suddenly, Shiozaki screamed and collapsed. Kouda came running in from the roof, birds frantically flapping their wings on either shoulder as an army of squirrels and raccoons racing after him, “Fire. There’s fire everywhere…”

“Figured.” Izuku gulped. “Any idea if this is the real fire villain or if it’s another clone?”

“Probably another clone.” Kirishima said, knocking his fists together. “Do you want me to go out and handle him?”

Izuku shook his head, “Fire can counter Shiozaki’s vines, but not Tsubasa’s air wall. Give it a few minutes.”

“I can always brainwash him if he gets too close.” Shinso said. “But I’m not sure if that’ll actually work on a clone.”

Izuku nodded, “Kouda, see if you can get us the location of the cloner. If we can bait them closer and get them under Shinso’s control, that’ll take away their reinforcements and put us on more even footing.”

Kouda nodded and started whispering frantically to his gathered animals as Izuku went to a window. Flames were licking all the way to the invisible wall and he saw the patchwork-looking villain banging his fist against the wall. The fireraged brightly behind him and a gust of wind blew some of the flames toward him. Instead of standing strong like Izuku had expected though, he flinched back. The flames

covered him completely for a moment and when they were gone the villain winced before he started dissolving into the same grey goop as before.

“Guys, change of plans.” Izuku said. “The flame user is weak to fire.”

Chapter End Notes

Next update: 04.24.2021

Fire

Chapter Summary

The attack continues.

Chapter Notes

Art!
Holy Chicken Nugget Overlord

Memes!
X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku glanced towards the woods as Kirishima and Mina finished soaking Sero's tape, "And you're sure this won't hurt you, right?"

"Nope." Sero gave a thumbs up. "My tape doesn't have nerves or anything like Shiozaki's vines do, and I rip and destroy it all the time, so this is no big deal. I'll be fine, dude!"

Izuku nodded, "Kodai, Shiozaki. Are you both ready?"

They nodded and Shiozaki used her vines to grab the tape and thread it outside Tsuburaba's wall of air, laying it out on the ground a few inches from the invisible barrier. She retracted her vines as Kodai touched her hands together and the tape got giant. As soon as they finished, another clone of the flame user sauntered out of the woods toward them.

"We don't have to kill you, you know!" The villain yelled. "Let's start over. My name's Dabi and we're the Vanguard Action Squad of the League of Villains, so you're fucked. Just give us the quirkless kid, and we'll leave the rest of you alone! You can end this right now!"

Izuku's face hardened in determination as he stared down the villain, "So can I. Kaminari! Now!"

Kaminari grinned and shocked the end of Sero's tape with enough electricity to light it on fire. The acid Mina had soaked it in acted as an accelerant and within moments there was a wall of fire protecting them right alongside the wall of air.

The newest clone dissolved into goop and Izuku smirked as the other kids erupted into cheers, “Let’s see you get through *that,* Dabi.”

“Fight fire with fire?” Tsu asked skeptically, keeping her voice low as they hid behind a tree.

“Well, metaphorically.” Ochako huffed. “Like, I know it’s probably gross, but if *you* had an entire mouth full of knives instead of trying to fight him with a pair of toothpicks…”

“Oh no, it’s not the knife teeth that are the problem, that’s cool!” Toga interrupted. “But how would we even get that guy’s blood with all those knives everywhere?!”

“You need to drink it, right?” Tsu asked thoughtfully.

“Yep!” Toga grinned, then her eyes widened and she forced the other two to the ground right as one of Moonfish’s blades buried itself in the wood right above their heads. “Alright girls, time to move!”

It took a minute to find cover again, but they eventually found a suitably large rock to hide behind and Tsu held her arm out to Toga, “Turn into me.”

“What?” Toga’s eyes widened in excitement. “But you were one of the few who didn’t give me your blood earlier.”

“I know.” Tsu nodded. “But with my tongue, you won’t have to get close. As long as we can make him bleed, you can drink it. Plus you saved my life once already.”

Toga grinned and sucked at a scrape on Tsu’s arm and within moments, they were identical. Ochako peaked out from behind the rock, “So now we just need to cut him, right?”

“Right.” One of the Tsu’s croaked. “Do you think that outfit is knife proof? Straightjackets are so totally not cute!”

Well, that one was Toga.

Ochako frowned, “Well, there’s only one way to find out. Mind if I borrow that knife?”

“Nope!” Toga grinned. “Have fun cutting people up!”

“Uh…thanks?” Ochako shook her head and grabbed the knife,

activating her quirk on it before running out from behind the rock. “Knife bitch! Take this!”

She launched the knife as hard as she could, rolling to dodge the volley of blades that shot at her before Moonfish screamed as her knife found it’s mark. She hazarded a look back and gulped as she realized the knife was buried in his shoulder. She’d kinda just been expecting a scrape at best…

Well, there was no time to worry about it now, “Toga, now!”

Ochako ran through the woods, acting at the distraction as a long tongue shot out from behind the rock. She wasn’t quite sure their plan had worked until one of the blades that had been trying to stab her was suddenly blocked by another knife that was just as large.

“Killing people is not cute!” Toga had pulled Moonfish’s hood off and torn through sleeves on his straightjacket so she could move better, but she had just as many knives if not more and as Ochako watched, parts of her body were shifting into Kirishima and turning into rock as Moonfish tried to stab her. “Let’s play by *my* rules now!”

“Come on, we need to get back to camp.” Tororki said.

“Not yet.” Katsuki turned in the opposite direction. “Come if you want.”

“We don't have permission to fight, Bakugo.” Todoroki growled. “Are you an idiot? Do you *want* to get in trouble?”

“I *want* to save everyone.” Katsuki snarled back. “Look, we’re just a little bit past halfway, right? We double back, make sure no one’s behind us, and add anyone we run across to our group. There’s strength in numbers, right? So why should we leave anyone behind to fight alone? We need to be strong enough to keep everyone safe.”

He didn’t wait for Todoroki to finish thinking about it before turning and stalking away. Icyhot *was* right, they couldn’t fight, but a villain was more likely to attack or injure someone who was alone, so he was grateful when he heard Icyhot jog up beside him.

“We’re going to have to be careful.” Todorki said seriously.

“Obviously, dumbass.” Katsuki rolled his eyes. “Come on, let’s run, it’ll be quicker.”

They had just barely started running when a voice cut them off, “And just what do you boys think you’re doing? You’re running in the wrong direction!”

Katsuki and Todoroki both skidded to a stop as Ragdoll came storming up to them, “Seriously, kids?! You’re supposed to be going back to camp!”

“We were just…” Katsuki started.

“We were making sure there was no one behind us.” Todoroki cut in. “We didn’t want any of our classmates to be left behind.”

Ragdoll’s face softened, “There’s no other students behind me, I used search. Let’s head back together, alright? Spread out and keep an eye out for other students, but make sure you can both still see me, alright?”

They nodded and started running back. Ragdoll stayed on teh path, while Katsuki took the woods on the right and Todoroki took the woods on the left. They ran for a few minutes without finding anyone, either students or villains, when Katsuki heard Ragdoll shout and turned, only to see her disappear as a villain put something in the pocket of his gaudy yellow coat. He didn’t even think before charging and he could see Todoroki doing the same from the other side.

The villain tensed, “Ah, I had thought she was alone. Oh well, I suppose it is time to take my leave, gentlemen. I already have my prize.”

He jumped up and started hopping through the trees, so Katsuki launched himself after him as Todoroki followed on the ground, sliding along an ice path, “Give her back you asshole!”

“If we’re going to kill anyone, we need to make sure that they aren’t true heroes.”

Shouta felt a wave of dread and pushed himself faster. No one was going to die today, not on his watch!

“Why should we care?” another voice said. “They’re heroes, we’re villains, seems pretty simple to me.”

Shouta could see the clearing now. Tiger and Mandalay were facing off against two villains, one of which was pinning someone to the

ground, although Shouta couldn't see who. There wasn't time to care though. If the villains were distracted arguing, then he wasn't going to miss that chance.

"Stain taught us…" The lizard guy fell to the ground as Shouta kicked him in the head and he wrapped the guy in his capture weapon and flung him against a tree for good measure. Tiger used the opening to start fighting with the other one while Mandalay ran and helped up the victim, who turned out to be Pixiebob. There weren't any students to be seen.

"Thanks Aizawa." Mandalay nodded gratefully. "Are you alright Pixiebob?"

"Fine, just a little shaken." Pixiebob hesitantly pushed Mandalay away so she was standing on her own. "Just give me a minute and I'll be good to go."

"I've got this one!" Tiger yelled, launching another punch. "You guys go and find the rest of the students!"

Aizawa nodded, "Come on, the students back at camp have barricaded themselves in , but the sooner we find the rest of them, the sooner we can get back and protect them."

Kendo and Tetsutetsu looked at the ground as Vlad King glowered down at them. Somehow they'd been kinda hoping that the intimidating effect would be lost behind the gas masks they were all wearing, but somehow, that just made it worse, "And just what were you thinking, charging in like that?"

"Well, uh…" Kendo glanced at Tetsutetsu, who looked up at Vlad with more bravery than she felt at the moment.

"We can't catch up to 1A if we run away from fights, sir!" He yelled. "I know you can feel it, so if we can help, why shouldn't we?!"

Vlad sighed, "Because you can land yourself in a lot of trouble for vigilantism, which could get in the way of saving more people later. I get it, it's hard when 1A gets all the attention, but still, you need to follow…"

There was the sound of a gunshot and all of a sudden, Vlad doubled over, clutching his shoulder, "Ugh, something tells me that wasn't Deku…"

“A gun?!” Kendo enlarged her fists, looking around for their attacker. “What kind of villain brings a…? Wait, do you think the villain is quirkless too?”

“Most likely just too scared to rely on his own quirk.” Tetsutetsu growled. “Come on out, you coward!”

Vlad grit his teeth and straightened, “With how small this team of villains seems to be, I agree with Tetsutetsu. I doubt there would be two villains so close to one another, so the gas user is most likely the one carrying the gun. Get back to camp kids, I can handle this.”

“But…” Kendo looked at his shoulder with concern. “But sir, you’ve been shot!”

Vlad’s grin was frightening, even behind the mask, “I have to bleed for my quirk to work anyway. Go.”

“With all do respect, sir, I really don’t think…” Tetstutetsu’s eyes widened as another gunshot rang through the forest and he moved, activating his quirk and lunging in front of Kendo just as a bullet *tinged* against his skin, “I, uh, I don’t think planning on getting shot is a good plan.”

Vlad made a sound halfway between a sigh and a groan, “Fine, you *might* have a point. Kendo, stay behind me. Tetsutestu, keep that quirk activated. Let’s find this guy quick.”

The mist swirled around them as they made their way to the thickest part, moving as slowly as they could afford to while wearing the gas masks. Visibility had never been *good,* but it got progressively worse and the bullets just kept coming until a lucky shot blew Tetsutetsu’s mask clean off.

“You really thought you could sneak up on me?” A voice echoed out of the mist. “This gas is an extension of my senses, I can feel every move you make! Your bulletproof bodyguard can’t hold his breath forever and you others don’t stand a chance! You fake heroes may as well give up now!”

Tetsutetsu clamped a hand over his mouth and was about to charge when Vlad put a hand on his shoulder. He looked up at him in anger and confusion that morphed into shock and concern when Vlad took a deep breath and took off his mask. He jerked his thumb toward where the villain was and Tetsutetsu couldn’t afford to hesitate. He put on the mask and charged.

“Sensei,” Kendo asked. “You…”

Vlad shook his head and started sending out hardened tendrils of his blood, making the mist swirl in every direction and probably confusing the villain, which gave Kendo an idea, “It won’t help you breath, but it might help mask both your movements…”

She grew her hands as large as they could go and began waving them around like giant fans, changing up the movements as frequently as possible to make sure the gas could never settle into any identifiable pattern. She lost sight of the other two as Vlad joined the charge and she heard another gunshot and a short scream before the mist started to clear.

She ran toward the others and by the time the gas cleared out enough for her to see them, Tetstutetsu had taken off the mask and was holding it up to Vlad’s face. The villain was knocked out and restrained by ropes of solid blood. They’d done it.

The mist finally thinned out almost completely and Vlad tore the mask off his face, “Good, that’s done with, now let’s get you all back to camp.”

Dabi glared at the wall of fire. How had those stupid kids figured it out so quickly? He was really starting to understand why Shigaraki hated that Deku kid so much, but he couldn’t worry about that now, “Twice, who all did you take measurements of?”

“None of your business!” Twice shouted. “Hmm, I think I got everyone except Kurogiri. It’s hard to measure mist! Piece of cake!”

“Make a couple clones of Muscular. Actually, make as many as you can.” Dabi turned back to the camp and grinned. “Time to pull out the big guns.”

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 04.27.2021

New Update Schedule:
Monday: Viridian
Tuesday: Deku
Wednesday: Cheat Code
Thursday: Mastermind
Friday: Viridian

Cornered

Chapter Summary

The fight continues.

Chapter Notes

Memes!
X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Katsuki raced above the trees after that stupid yellow coat. His wrists were starting to feel the strain, especially after the intensive training they'd been doing these past few days, but he ignored that and pushed forward, "Get back here you ugly-ass mother fucker! Give her back!"

"Apologies gentlemen, but finder's keepers!" The villain replied, making part of a tree disappear out of his path by shrinking it down into a little ball.

"Somehow, I don't think that applies to kidnappings." Todoroki said dryly.

"Boys!" A high voice almost made Katsuki lose his rhythm and he glanced down to see Pixiebob running toward them. "You're not supposed to be engaging with the villains!"

Katsuki bristled, "But that bastard…"

"He took Ragdoll!" Todoroki cut in. "He shrunk her down into one of the marbles in his pocket!"

The villain cheered. "Good eye! But are you sure you saw what you saw?" He did some weird sleight of hand thing, pulling marbles out of numerous hidden pockets and making them disappear again, "She could be in this pocket, or this one, or this one, or perhaps in my shoe, or maybe even in my…"

He was cut off as the ground rose up beneath him and buried him up to his chin.

"It doesn't matter much where you hid her." Pixiebob huffed. "We've got you and that means we've got her too. Good work cuties, just as I

expected from such strapping young kittens!”

“You did all the work.” Todoroki grumbled.

Katsuki rolled his eyes. “And I still have a boyfriend.”

Pixiebob pouted and made a few miniature dirt monsters, “Then I guess I better keep looking. Let’s find the others.”

Mandalay squeaked as she was pulled roughly into the undergrowth and she would have attacked if she hadn’t recognized the student that grabbed her, “Shouji? What are you…?”

“Shhh….” Shouji clapped a hand over her mouth. “He’s tracking sound and movement.”

“What?” Mandalay whispered. “Who?”

There was a loud crash a few feet away and Mandalay gasped softly at the sheer size of the shadow currently hunting them.

“Dark shadow,” Shoji muttered. “is difficult to control in the dark.”

Tiger ran into the forest, leaving the lizard-looking villain tied to a tree as he searched for more students. Ragdoll should be cleaning the far end of the forest, so Tiger headed in that direction so he could meet up with her. He wasn’t running long before he heard something moving and he headed in that direction, eyes widening when he saw a tired-looking Awase pulling a bleeding Yaoyorozu through the trees.

When he caught sight of him, Awase looked up gratefully, “Tiger, thank goodness! It’s coming!”

“What’s coming?” Tiger asked. “What are you…?”

He took a sharp breath when he saw a nomu charging through the trees behind them. It’s arms were like swiss army knives and trees crashed to the ground left and right as the nomu cut through them with a chainsaw on one side and a nasty-looking ax on the other.

“You monster.” Tiger lowed himself into a fighting stance. “Attacking children? Have you no shame?”

The nomu didn’t respond, not that Tiger expected it to, but it gave an unholy screech as it charged him.

“Get behind me children!” Tiger shouted. “I’ll restrain this fiend!”

He contorted his body to avoid the worst of the blades but there were so many to dodge that he couldn’t get a good grip on the thing.

“Yaoyorozu! Be careful!” Awase said. “You already made all those gas masks, you’re gonna pass out!”

“I can…” Yaoyorozu panted. “I just need to make one more thing!”

“Don’t strain yourself, young Yaoyorozu.” Tiger insisted. “I’ve got this.”

At least, he hoped he did. Nomus were notoriously hard to beat and this one in particular was tricky, but as long as he could save the students, that would have to be enough.

After a few moments, Awase threw something to him, “Tiger! Catch!”

He spun on his heel and caught what looked like an extra-large blanket.

“It’s kevlar!” Yaoyorozu shouted weakly. “Wrap his arms and Awase can bind the fabric to trap it!”

Tiger nodded. It was a huge piece of fabric, much larger than Yaoyorozu really had the resources to safely make at the moment, which meant that he only had one chance to get this right.

He felt a little ridiculous spreading the blanket out in front of him. It was like he was trying to catch a troublesome toddler instead of a deadly monster. He flinched slightly as he gripped the nomu in a giant bear hug, wrapping it up like a burrito and gripping tighter as it’s arms tried to tear through the favrib, “Awase, now!”

Awase gulped, but ran to help, bonding the kevlar both to the monster’s skin and to itself as the nomu roared. Once he was sure everything was secure, Tiger slowly loosened his grip, “Perhaps we should bond it to that cliff over there, just to be safe.”

Awase nodded and picked up Yaoyorozu as Tiger carried the nomu over to the ciff face and held it in place. When it was firmly stuck there, Tiger held out his arms for Yaoyorozu and Awase handed her over gratefully. Tiger’s heart sank when he felt how light she was. She was barely conscious and she must have used almost every available ounce of fat in her body because her knees and elbows dug into him

as he shifted her onto his back.

“Come on,” he said, “Let’s let you kids home.”

“Take a deep breath, Tokoyami.” Mandalay projected. “The heroes are here. We’ll protect you, you’re safe.”

“No!” Dark Shadow screamed. “Kill villains! Protect friends!”

“I'll protect them, I promise.” Mandalay kept her thoughts as calm as possible. “But to do that, I need you to calm down, ok? They’re going to be so sad and scared to see you like this. Just take a deep breath in and a deep breath out. That’s it. You’re ok. We’re ok. We’re gonna be fine.”

Dark shadow didn’t let go of Tokoyami or shink down to his normal size, but when he stopped muttering about blood and murder, Mandaly figured it was safe to come out.

“Thank you.” Tokoyami nodded gratefully. “I apologize for losing control like that.”

“It’s alright.” Mandalay smiled. “I’m just glad we were able to get you back. Come on, let’s get you to camp where it’s safe.”

“Hold strong!” Izuku yelled as he reloaded. “Keep fighting!”

He recognized Muscular form the reports of Water hoses’s death and knew that even one of him would be almost impossible to beat, but they were having to fight two of the guys at a time. Dabi and the cloning villain stood at the edge of the forest, but they couldn’t even get to them because every time they destroyed one clone, the villains just made another.

The air wall was long gone, destroyed within seconds of the onslaught and even though they’d all retreated inside, the building had held up about as well as the air wall had. They had destroyed something like 10 or 15 clones at this point, Izuku had lost count, but they just kept coming with no end and even as fragile as they were, Muscular was legitimately trying to kill them and he was more than strong enough to deal significant damage before they could destroy one. A few of the students already had broken bones and Izuku watched in horror as one of the clones grabbed Kirishima tightly enough that the rock literally cracked under his grip and threw him through a wall. If this

kept going, someone was going to die.

Izuku took a deep breath and ran toward Dabi, “Fine! I’ll do it! I’ll go with you! Just stop!”

Dabi grinned, running forward to torch the Muscular that had attacked Kirishima as the clone that the other villain had been making dissolved back into the goop, “Good choice.”

“Midoriya! No!” Shinso yelled. “What do you think you’re doing?!”

Izuku smiled sadly, “I’m keeping everyone sa…”

His mind went blank as Shinso took control, “Get back here you idiot and let us protect you.”

Izuku’s feet moved against his will and he didn’t know whether he was angry or relieved as he moved back toward the safety of his classmates.

Suddenly, a searing hand on the back of his neck broke Shinso’s hold and Dabi snarled, “Not so fast, *Deku,* you’re ours, or would you prefer we kill you and then murder all your precious little classmates one by one?”

Izuku deflated, “No. I-I’ll go with you.”

“That’s more like it.” Dabi smirked. “Oh, and just to make sure we don’t have any problems…”

He grabbed the gun from Izuku’s hand and he had to flinch away from the heat as Dabi literally melted the gun in the palm of his hand. He then shoved Izuku forward, turning to the cloning villain, “Come one, Twice, let’s get going. And make a few clones of Mustard, just to make sure none of those brats can follow us.”

Ochako watched in awe as Toga and Moonfish fought. He may have been a little crazier, but even if Toga had never used his quirk before, she knew her away around knives. Where moonfish was stabbing randomly, every single one of Toga’s strikes was pinpointed for maximum blood loss and he couldn’t even stab her because parts of her were constantly shifting into people who were able to counter him. It was amazing!

Ochako knew they were running out of time, though. The vials on

Toga's belt were all empty and they all knew that blood wouldn't last forever. How much had she even drank? Maybe like an ounce or two from each person, if that? How long would that allow her to hold the transformations?

As it turned out, not very long, but Ochako needn't have worried, because Toga wasn't about to let that become an issue.

"I've never tried this before, but it's kinda like an inbetween point between transformations right?" Toga pouted. "I don't think it'll be very cute though."

She shifted again and suddenly, it was Shouji facing Moonfish...except for that when the mouths on the ends of his arms opened, dozens of knives shot out. Moonfish didn't stand a chance. In less than a minute, he was on the ground as the pain and blood loss finally got to be too much for him to stay upright.

"I was right." Toga shuddered as she melted back into herself. "That was totally not cute."

A cloud of poisonous gas stretched out behind them and unlike the villains, Izuku didn't have a gas mask, so he was starting to get light headed. He kept hoping to run into one of the teachers, but with the way Dabi was leading them *away* from the fighting, he wasn't liking his odds. He had no idea where their destination was, but they must be close, because the magnet villain he'd seen earlier came rushing out of the woods toward him, "The heroes are coming, we gotta go!"

Dabi scowled. "Great work Magne. Where's spinner?"

"Captured." Magne said. "I just barely got away. Are you three alright?"

"Two." Dabi corrected. "The fry sauce twins over there are just clones."

"It's Mustard." The clones snapped.

"Sure." Dabi rolled his eyes. "Whatever."

"Well, I don't think we have time to wait for 'em." Magne said. "I saw Eraserhead on my way here. He was busy helping one of the kids and didn't see me, but it's only a matter of time before he heads this way."

Dabi swore. “Ketchup! Make a smoke screen in that direction! Twice, make a clone of this brat! That’ll keep him off our tail long enough to get away.”

“Do you not know how long it takes to measure someone?” Twice complained. “Easy peasy!”

Izuku tensed. This was his only chance. He held still until Twice got close enough, then headbutted him away and grabbed his tape measure, wrapping it around Dabi’s hands and booking it.

He could hear Dabi cursing behind him and smelled smoke, which pushed him to run a little faster. His stomach sank as he realized just how far they’d gotten from the main attack. Uness Eraser had been on Magne’s tail, which didn’t seem likely, he wouldn’t be showing up before Izuku was recaptured. He wasn’t getting out of this. What was he supposed to do? Just give up?

Izuku shook his head. No. He was a hero. Heroes didn’t give up. He needed a plan. He couldn’t avoid getting captured, so what was the next best option? Izuku’s breath caught as he recognized his surroundings. The training targets! He hadn’t left many of them, but there should be one near here and it would have a tracker inside. There was no guarantee Eraser would even think to look for the signal, but it was better than being kidnapped with no way to find him!

He had to enter Mustard’s gas to reach the target, so he took as few breaths as he could, but the world was still starting to spin around him as he pushed forward until he found the tree the target should be hidden in. A small hole in one of the knots caught his eye and Izuku cried in relief as his hand closed around the blinking marble. He collapsed onto his knees and shoved it into his shoe right before Dabi and the other villains entered the clearing.

“You...quirkless...not worth…” Dabi’s words blended together and Izuku wasn’t sure if Twice had cloned him or if the gas was just making him see double. “Idiot...into the gas...stupid brat…”

He saw Dabi take out a phone and say *something.* Izuku was too far gone to understand what he said, but he must have been calling kurogiri, because it only took a few seconds for a portal to appear. Izuku scrambled weakly away, but the next thing he knew, there was a searing pain as Dabi grabbed his arm and shoved him roughly through the portal just before everything went black.

Shouta reached camp just after the Pussycats, carrying two students who had passed out from the gas. He had run into Vlad, Tetsutetsu and Kendo on his way and they followed behind him carrying even more victims.

He'd been hoping to find the students huddled together in a corner of the building, terrified, but safe, but instead they were scattered across the yard and the building may as well have been wet cardboard with how well it withstood whatever had happened to them. The Pussycats were busy giving first aid and Shouta counted at least ten broken bones and three students unconscious from the gas and that was just at first glance. Even Kirishima had a broken arm, which Shouta honestly hadn't thought was possible without extreme quirk exhaustion.

"What do you mean, he's gone?!" Uraraka's shrill yell cut over the white noise in Shouta's head. "They kidnapped Deku?!"

No...

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 05.04.2021

Tracker

Chapter Summary

Izuku gets comfy

Chapter Notes

Cosplay!
@chocolatcat07

Memes!
X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Group message

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Hey, I heard an SOS and it mentioned UA. @12579 Is everybody ok?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Shou, when someone asks you a question, you're supposed to respond.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Shou?

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

I'm sure they're fine. If something had happened, Deku would have informed us.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

You see, I know you're right, but now I'm panicking and my brain is

trying to convince me that they're not responding because something happened to *both* of them.

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Stop worrying. I'll text him. And if he's still being dumb, maybe Shinso'll have his phone on him. Goodness knows the kid's sleep schedule is messed up enough that he'll be awake.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Um, guys? An article just dropped saying that the training camp was attacked. It says a student was abducted. Are we *sure* they're ok?

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

They've survived villain attacks in the past. We have to trust that they can take care of themselves.

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

@58726 Any luck contacting anyone?

87657: *(Mr. Brave)*

Great, now she's not responding either. Are we just slowly getting picked off one by one?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Sorry, I just got off the phone with Shinso and Shou.

72598: *(Sir Nighteye)*

And?

58726: *(Ms. Joke)*

Deku's gone.

Izuku wasn't alone when he woke up, but it would have been better if he had been. It wasn't as if Kurogiri was doing anything violent or disturbing, he was just cleaning glasses at what looked like a bar, but it would have been a lot easier to plan, or better yet *attempt,* an escape if he wasn't being watched. The room he was being kept in had several doors, but even if he hadn't been tied up and unable to get to them, Izuku had no way of knowing which one, if any, led outside and choosing the wrong one could get him hopelessly lost and trap him further.

Not that he was in any condition to be running or fighting right now, of course. He had a splitting headache from the aftereffects of the gas he'd been exposed to and the marble he'd stuffed in his shoe was digging painfully into his foot, which was ironically comforting considering that it meant the league hadn't managed to find it yet. A quick souffle in his chair was enough to figure out that the few weapons he'd had on him when he was abducted hadn't gotten the same treatment.

Kurogiri caught him squirming and stopped to glare at him, "There's no point in struggling. Those knots are far too tight. They're not going anywhere."

Izuku huffed and gave a final tug at the ropes, "Yeah, sure. But hey, as long as I'm here, mind telling me *why?* I already told you guys I don't want one of your boss's stupid quirks and pretty much every single one of my classmates is stronger than I am and would make a bigger splash in the news, not to mention that some of them are rich and would make much better ransom victims. Why go for the quirkless kid?"

Kurogiri sighed and set down the glass he was wiping, "I'll be honest with you, young man, I have no idea. Young Tomura would have much rather murdered you in your sleep than bring you here."

Izuku gulped. Getting kidnapped was the better option? He was *lucky?!* Somehow, it didn't feel like it.

“It wasn’t Tomura, however, that gave the order for your abduction.” Kurogiri continued. “It was Sensei.”

“Sensei?” Izuku breathed. “All for One? Why would he want *me?!”*

“I have no idea.” Kurogiri picked his glass back up. “But I would recommend not fighting too hard against it, whatever it is. Sensei has a talent for getting his way.”

Izuku fell silent. This was bad. Well, it was always going to be bad, considering that getting kidnapped was awful, but if it was really All for One who had given the order, then Izuku was screwed. Even if Eraser and the others managed to find out about the tracker, they might not be in time to rescue him. He was screwed.

One of the doors opened and he made a note that that particular door was *not* an exit as Shigaraki strode in, “So, the little brat’s awake, huh? High time for the game to start. I was getting bored.”

Izuku glared at him, but didn’t say anything as Shigaraki came up to him, “So, not so high and mighty now, are ya? None of of your stupid classmates are here to back you up this time!”

He couldn’t help flinching when Shigaraki raised his hand and slapped him across the face, thankfully with only four fingers, but Izuku knew what the point was. It was a threat. A demonstration of total power and control.

I can kill you at any time and there’s nothing you can do to stop me.

“I’d say stop playing with the brat, but it’s fun to watch him flinch.” Dabi smirked as he followed Shigaraki into the room. “Hey, do you think the kid already has burn scars?”

“I mean, he grew up with that Bakugo brat, so probably.” Magne said, walking in. “He’s annoying enough that if I went to school with him, I’d probably beat him up myself.”

“Hear that, brat?” Shigaraki gave him an unhinged grin. “Everyone here just wants to see you suffer. How does it feel to be completely alone.”

Izuku didn’t give him the satisfaction of seeing him flinch again, “I’m used to it.”

Dabi snorted, “Yeah, you should be. So Dusty, can we kill him yet?”

“Not until Sensei gives permission.” Shigaraki shot a glance toward an old TV in the corner. “But I informed him our mission was a success...mostly.”

“We lost most of our recruits and all we have to show for it is one useless kid?” Dabi grumbled. “Yeah, sounds *real* successful to me.”

The villains all snapped to attention as a scratchy voice echoed out of the TV, “All is not as it seems at first. Perhaps young Deku will still surprise us.”

Izuku’s eyes widened and he had to work to calm his breathing as he whispered, “All for One.”

Ochako hadn’t stopped crying since they’d gotten the news that Deku had been kidnapped and Himiko hadn’t had the heart to leave her side. Sure, they’d survived, but when it really mattered, they’d been too late to save him to save anyone. Their wounds were treated, backup had arrived, and most of the villains had been captured. It should have been something to celebrate, but instead it just felt empty.

“That idiot.” Ochako wiped her eyes furiously. “I swear, if he doesn’t survive, I’ll kill him.”

Himiko giggled, “Get in line. I think Aizawa is gonna want a piece of him first.”

“It *was* brave of him to sacrifice himself like that.” Tsu said. “I just wish he hadn’t had to.”

“Well he did.” Ochako snapped. “Ugh, I’m sorry, Tsu. It’s just, Deku’s my friend! I don’t want him to get hurt or…”

Himiko clapped her hands together abruptly, “You know what we need right now?”

Ochako huffed, “An infinite supply of ice cream?”

“A plan to save Deku?” Tsu added.

“Well, yes to both of those things, but no.” Himiko forced an excited smile onto her face. “What we need is a distraction! Get moving! Feel useful!”

“Doing what?” Ochako’s shoulders slumped. “Recovery girl said we

weren't allowed to do anything too strenuous, which means helping clean up is out and what else are we supposed to do, huh? It feels wrong to just sit and do our nails or something."

Tsu nodded and Himiko frowned, "Well, I guess...oh! That might work!"

Ochko looked at her suspiciously, "What?"

Himko shook her head, "You know that training exercise I was doing with Deku?"

"You mean the one where you turned into us and chased him around the forest?" Tsu asked bluntly.

Himiko giggled sadly, "Yeah, that one. Well, when we were deciding what to do, the pussycats made us promise that we'd try to leave no trace, which meant that we wouldn't leave any of the trackers. Deku got most of them, but we could probably go around and collect the rest, since...well, you know…"

"Since he's not here to do it himself." Ochako took a deep breath and nodded. "Yeah. Yeah, okay."

"It's better than just sitting here being anxious." Tsu shrugged. "Let's hop to it."

"Perfect!" Toga pulled out her phone. "I didn't look because that would be cheating and super not cute, but Eraser gave me a list of where he hid all of them…"

The villains weren't gentle as they forced him through the portal. Dabi grabbed him by the hair and dragged him, chair and all, to the inky black spot in the floor and Izuku had to resist the urge to shout as he fell into the new location, grimacing in pain as the chair tipped and he fell hard onto his side.

"I would give my apologies for Tomura's behavior." A chilling voice said. "But if you had just been a little more polite, maybe he would like you more."

Izuku put on a brave face as he turned to All for One, who was terrifying in an unbeatable cyborg kind of way, even if it looked like he was on life support. He glared at where his eyes should have been, "Sorry. Being nice to villains hasn't exactly been that high on my

priorities list."

"Of course." All for One sighed. "I suppose you've been rather busy training to be a hero and writing anonymous articles. Yes, I know about those. Like Kurogiri said, I have a talent for getting my way."

Izuku froze. He supposed it made sense for All for One to know about them, considering that he hadn't really made a lot of moves to hide it, but what was more surprising was the fact that he seemed annoyed. He wiggled slightly to get a bit more comfortable, "Of all the things I've done to get in your way, I would have thought that one would be pretty tame. Shouldn't you be happy about hero society getting torn down?"

His breath caught as All for One turned to him and he had no idea if the terror he felt was the result of a quirk or if All for One's presence was really just that strong, "You know that the system creates its own villains, boy. Why would I want to destroy what works?"

"But…" Izuku's mouth was dry. "But Shigaraki…"

"Wants to destroy All Might and the society he represents, yes." All for One nodded. "But, unlike your precious little critiques, I can easily point Shigaraki where I want him to go, which makes him useful. Would *you* like to be useful, Deku?"

Deku swallowed, "Not to you. Why? Were you hoping to convince me? You're going to have to try harder."

All for One grinned, "Oh, I've barely begun."

"We can use *search* to find him, right?" Vlad asked. "We recovered Ragdoll before those villains were able to abduct her."

"It's not that simple." Mandalay sighed. "Yes, Pixiebob *technically* recovered her, but the villain who tried to take her trapped her in a marble and we haven't been able to reverse the effects yet."

"Can't Eraser just cancel his quirk?" All Might asked. "Taking away his quirk should free her, correct."

"We already tried that." Shouta said tiredly. "But while I was able to cancel his ability to create new marbles, my quirk doesn't always affect the *effects* of a quirk. For example, even if I erased Todoroki's quirk, the glacier he just made wouldn't instantly melt. We were

hoping this would be an actively activated quirk like Warp Gate, but…"

"But it seems as though our dear Ragdoll is trapped until we can convince Mr. Compress to free her." Nedzu finished. "Which we are working on, but I believe we can all agree that shouldn't be our only plan of action. And that doesn't even *begin* to address how we are going to spin this for the media…"

The door slammed open and the heroes jumped to their feet, ready for a fight, only slightly relaxing when they realized it was just Toga. Uraraka and Asui followed close behind her and to Shouta's confusion, all three had wide, almost hopeful grins on their faces.

"Himiko, we're in the middle of a meeting." Vlad scolded. "I know you're still working on getting a hang of a lot of social skills, you can't just barge in here while we're working on a case."

"Does it count as barging if I have information on the case?" Toga asked. "Probably, but oh well!"

"Wait." Shouta straightened up in his seat. "You have information? Why didn't you already tell Tsukauchi during your interrogation."

"Because we didn't have it yet." Tsu said bluntly.

"And what information did you uncover?" Nedzu asked curiously.

Uraraka didn't seem like she could hold it in anymore as she blurted out, "One of the trackers is missing!"

The heroes looked at eachother and Nedzu rested his chin on his paws as he learned forward, "Trackers? Would you care to explain?"

"Deku was supposed to find those little tracker-marble things while Toga was hunting him, right?" Uraraka bounced in place. "Well, he had a couple left, so we were out collecting them, but one of them wasn't there! And it was the one closest to camp, so if he managed to grab it on his way out…"

Shouta stamped down on the tiny spark of hope before it could hurt him, "How do you know he didn't collect it earlier and forget to check it off the list?"

The girls deflated and Shouta felt terrible as Toga scuffed the floor with her toe, "We, uh, we hadn't thought about that."

“Well, you’ve got the rest of ‘em, right Eraser?” Tiger asked after a long moment. “We can see if it’s really missing.”

Shouta nodded. Counting all the marbles took a few minutes and it felt like they were wasting their time with such a ridiculous task. Shouta wanted to scream, but if there was even the smallest chance that this could lead them to Deku, then he owed it to the kid to investigate, right? It was his fault the problem child had gotten kidnapped in the first place, afterall, if he’d just stayed with him instead of going off to save the others, the kid would still be there.”

“We’re still one short, right?” Pixiebob asked. “Eraser, you can track the signal, right?”

Shouta took out his phone, preparing for the signal to show up in the woods. There were a million possibilities for why this one marble could be missing. A crow might have stolen it, or he wrote down the wrong location on Toga’s cheat sheet. Hell, even the wind could have rolled it away. Rolling it all the way to Kamino Ward, however, was a bit of a stretch.

Shouta gave a terrifying grin as he looked up, “Good work girls. It looks like Deku didn’t give up without a fight after all.”

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 05.11.2021

Plans

Chapter Summary

Things are set in motion...

Chapter Notes

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

By the time Izuku got back to the bar, he was exhausted and felt like he was about to black out. All for One had apparently decided before kidnapping him that bribing him with a quirk wouldn't work, which was correct, of course, but it meant that he had decided to use pain and fear as an alternative, which was not great. Izuku had at least hoped to be able to find some weakness during his time with the symbol of evil, but unlike most people, All for One hadn't underestimated his pain tolerance.

Either that or he'd just decided to screw it and go *plus ultra* for fun.

Shigaraki cackled as he was dumped on the floor, "How was your time with the big boss, Deku? You having fun yet?"

Izuku grit his teeth, but all he could manage was a sharp hiss. The quirk All for One used to torture him was psychological, but even if it hadn't caused any physical damage, his brain and nerves were still screaming as if every bone in his body had been broken. Dang it. Eraserhead really needed to get his act together and save him. Soon. He looked over toward the TV, knowing that All for One was probably listening in, laughing at his misery.

"You really think you're interesting enough for the big guy to be watching after he's done with you?" Dabi kicked him in the ribs as he sneered down at him. "Nah, the recording light's not on, which means that right now, Dusty's creepy sensei cares even less about you than we do."

"Does that mean we can kill him now?" Magne asked boredly.

"Not quite." Kurogiri, ever the voice of reason apparently, said. "You will still need Sensei's approval to do something so permanent.

Perhaps he will still be able to prove his worth to us."

"Yeah, right." Shigaraki scratched at his neck in annoyance, "Fine. It's only a matter of time until the big boss realizes you're dead weight anyway, so we might as well take advantage of the glitch in the system."

Dabi raised an eyebrow, "Glitch?"

Shigaraki was scarier when he was smiling. He crouched down so he was closer to Izuku's level and looked him in the eye, "There are lots less permanent ways to damage someone."

Shouta glared as the villains were led into the conference room and restrained. They hadn't had any luck getting them to talk separately and Shouta wasn't hopeful that they'd be any more talkative if they were interrogated together, but Tsukauchi had pointed out that even if they had Deku's location, they still had no idea what exactly they were walking into. They could have a second base prepared that they could warp Deku to at the slightest provocation, and it would be beyond helpful to know where it was if that was the case, not that they wouldn't still take every step to make sure that didn't happen, but it didn't hurt to be prepared, especially since the optimal time to move wouldn't be until tonight anyway. But, even if they got nothing, he was still going to rescue that stupid, self-sacrificial problem child and put him in detention as soon as possible.

"If I might ask why we are here?" Mr. Compress asked politely. "You have been giving it a valiant effort, but you should have already discovered that we have no plans to become turncoats in our organization."

"Hmm." Nedzu pressed his paws together thoughtfully. "Plans change. Tell me, how many of you are Stain's followers?"

"What?" Bakugo yelled. "You're just content to sit here on your ass and do nothing?! You can't honestly expect me to believe that Shitty Hair!"

Kirishima grimaced, "Of course I'm not ok, Bakubro! I was *there* , I should have been able to keep him from giving himself up, but I couldn't' do anything. We had all these students and the villains still got him, so maybe it's better to leave it to the heroes."

“I can’t just do that!” Bakugo’s palms popped as he screamed. “Are you really expecting me to just give up on him?!”

Ochako sighed and took another nervous sip of her tea as she looked around the dorm common room. The two of them had been having this argument for over an hour now, with most of the class falling on one side or the other, joining in whenever things were reaching a lull or getting too heated. Ochako herself was on Bakugo’s side. She hadn’t been at the camp. She hadn’t had a chance to save him and now she’d probably never see him again. *Might* never see him again. She had to think positive.

“Everyone, calm down.” Iida said. “Believe me, I know better than anyone how frustrating it was to not be able to save Midoriya. At least the rest of you were *at* the camp! I was stuck here, suspended for doing the same thing that you all are discussing.”

“In our defense,” Kaminari pointed out, “saving a classmate and trying to murder a guy arn’t really the same thing…”

“They’re both vigilantism.” Yaoyorozu said. “I want to save Deku, we all do, but the fact is that the heroes are better equipped to handle this situation than we are. We just have to trust they’ll save him.”

“Yes, of course.” Sero rolled his eyes. “Let’s trust the hero system to save him when the entire media is trying to claim it was his fault that he was kidnapped.”

That made everyone go quiet. Without the yelling, the soft muttering of the television filled the space, reminding them all of why they’d turned the volume down almost to mute in the first place. Ever since the news of the attack had hit the news, a lot of people had been very vocal about criticizing UA for letting him into the hero course in the first place. They didn’t seem to care that he had sacrificed himself to save his classmates. To them, his abduction was just more evidence that a quirkless kid really *was* too weak to be a hero. Thankfully it wasn’t everyone, Ochako didn’t think she’d be able to restrain herself if it was, but there were enough people saying it and it was controversial enough that it was bringing in high ratings for the news stations and they kept highlighting it. She didn’t pity Nedzu and whoever else had to go to the press conference tonight.

“The fact remains that if you all disobey orders and go to rescue him, you *will* be suspended.” Iida insisted. “I want to save Midoriya too, but saving him now in this way will only keep us from being able to save

people later."

Todoroki nodded, "Which obviously isn't what Midoriya wants."

Tsu gave a thoughtful croak and Ochako turned toward her curiously, "What is it, Tsu? You've been really quiet."

Her eyes widened slightly and she blushed, "It's kind of a dumb idea, ribbit, but...did Toga-chan ever get in trouble for helping us fight Moonfish?"

"I…" Ochako thought for a moment. "I don't know."

"We could probably ask 1B." Mina pointed out. "They'll probably know."

"She shouldn't have." Todoroki said.

"Well, yeah, obviously." Sero said. "But laws, dude? They don't always make sense."

Todoroki frowned, "But she's Vlad King's daughter, isn't she?"

"Yeah?" Kirishima shrugged. "But what does that have to do with anything."

"There are certain loopholes for children of pro-heroes." Todoroki said slowly. "I thought it was common knowledge. Because we are already under hero custody, our hero parent automatically takes responsibility for our actions and while the law doesn't say it exactly, in practice, this means that we can act as a sidekick in certain emergency situations, even without verbal permission. Endeavor used it to take me out on patrols all the time. I hated it."

Ochako blinked in shock when Yaoyorozu nodded in agreement. "That's true, and even if it wasn't, I've overheard Midnight and Vlad talking about Toga a few times. She'd apparently already committed several crimes by the time he took custody of her, so her adoption doubled as a sort of redemption program and she's actually allowed to try for a hero license if she'd like one, just so long as Vlad signs off on it. She's technically a hero in training just like us."

"Not that the vampire isn't absolutely *riveting,* " Bakugo growled, "but we need to focus on saving Deku. How is any of this gonna help us get him back?"

“Toga-chan can use our quirks when she transforms.” Tsu said, gesturing as if the conclusion should be obvious. “It’s a compromise. If Toga goes on the raid and everyone who wants to save Deku gives her a few vials full of their blood then…”

“Then even if we can’t be there, which is stupid by the way, we’ll still be helping to save him.” Bakugo huffed. “Fine. Ponytail! Make a phlebotomy kit. We’re going with the frog’s plan.”

“Aizawa still has to approve.” Kirishima said, elbowing Bakugo in the ribs.

Bakugo just grinned, “He won’t have a choice.”

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 05.18.2021

Negotiation

Chapter Summary

Deals are made.

Chapter Notes

Art!
Magicalgirl_23
@fzzy_p0p
Indifferent_Insomnia

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku gulped as Shigaraki grinned down at him. He didn't know what a murderer considered *less permanent damage* and, honestly, he wasn't really anxious to find out, but he was trapped. They'd taken away his weapons and tied him up so he couldn't fight back. The only thing he could rely on at all until Eraserhead came to save him was his brain and that didn't really help against physical damage...unless he could find some way out of it.

"Um...can I offer an alternative?" He had no idea where he was going with this, he had no plan, but apparently he also had no filter, so it was happening and he was just gonna have to come up with something. Time to use that big brain of his and make Nedzu proud.

As expected, Shigaraki just looked at him in disbeleif and Dabi roared with laughter, "Come on, brat, how stupid can you get? You're tied up, about to be tortured out of your mind because we enjoy your pain and you really think we'll accept an *alternative?!"*

"Um…" Izuku shrugged as best he could. "I mean, it depends on if I can offer you something better, right? That's how deals work."

Shigaraki scoffed and rolled his eyes, "Unless you're offering to join us, I'm pretty sure you just failed your barter objective. Game over."

"Well, uh…" Izuku shuffled through everything he knew about Shigaraki. "Wait, you talk in gaming lingo a lot!"

“Because he’s a nerd.” Dabi smirked. “Which is an insult. You’re not helping your case here.”

“No! Not like…” Izuku forced himself to not panic. He needed to look in control. “What I mean is that the league didn’t have a lot of members before recently, right? So you didn’t have a lot of people to play with. And I’m sure Dabi and the others are sick of playing with you already too.”

“Wow. You’re really bad at this.” Shigaraki deadpanned. “It’s almost entertaining.”

“Yeah.” Dabi drawled. “Number one rule of avoiding torture. Add insult to injury. I mean, he’s not wrong, but still. Are we sure this guy is *actually* a master strategist or whatever?”

“He’s a quirkless brat, of course he’s stupid.” Shigaraki said. “But I want to see if he hits rock bottom and keeps digging. Go on, kid, what’s your point.”

Izuku’s cheeks burned at the insults, but he pushed forward, “Well, why don’t you play me? I’m literally a captive audience. I can’t say no to another round. You get a gaming partner, the rest of the league gets a break, and I already know you’re better than me, so we can add psychological torture and humiliation to the deal! What do you say?”

“That is the stupidest thing I’ve ever…” Dabi trailed off as he noticed Shigaraki nodding thoughtfully. “Please don’t tell me you’re actually considering this?!”

“What? The kid makes some good points!” Shigaraki defended. “You’re always whining whenever I make you play! It might be nice to play against someone who isn’t going to *melt my best controller.”*

“You dust your controllers all the time.” Dabi complained. “I dont’ get why you’re so upset over *one.”*

“It lit up!” Shigaraki yelled. “It was cool!”

“I don’t have a quirk.” Izuku pointed out. “I can’t lose control and break the controller.”

Dabi glared at him, “You’re just trying to get out of being tortured.”

“Well, yeah…” Izuku gave an awkward smile. “But, uh...do you *really* want to play him while we wait for Sensei to give you permission to

kill me?"

Dabi threw his hands in the air, "Ugh, fine! Go psychologically destroy the hero brat with video games...but I think we should up the ante a bit. Something should happen if he loses."

Izuku gulped and turned to Shigaraki, who was nodding thoughtfully, "Real life consequences always enhance the experience. So let's play it this way…"

He leaned forward, forcing Izuku to crane his neck to get away from him, and grinned, "You know a lot about heroes, right? So, every time you die in game, you tell us an interesting bit of info, like an NPC giving out a reward for winning a quest. If you refuse, we take a finger instead. How's that?"

Izuku felt sick to his stomach. It felt like a betrayal. Give the villains info on his friends, or take the torture himself. There were no good choices. If Eraser were here, he'd say that giving up the info was the logical option...and Nedzu would challenge him to come up with half truths or nuggets of info that sounded priceless, but were actually more worthless than his old teachers thought *he* was. It would be a challenge, but since when had Izuku stepped down from one of those?

He took a deep breath and nodded, "Deal. What game are we playing?"

Shouta didn't even look up as Bakugo, Uraraka, Shinso and Todoroki walked through the door, "No."

Bakugo scoffed, "You haven't even heard our idea yet."

"And whatever it is, the answer is no." Shouta rubbed the bridge of his nose. "The heroes will save Deku. You are students."

"But Toga's not." Uraraka pointed out. "She saved my life at the summer camp and you guys let her!"

"Her situation is different." Vlad King explained awkwardly, glancing at Shouta. "She's…"

"Under the guardianship of a pro-hero." Todoroki finished. "And not technically a UA student and so the school won't face backlash if she's injured like they would if one of us were."

Shouta sighed, “Your point?”

Shinso smirked and held up a bag. It was insulated to keep it cold and Shouta raised an eyebrow as he took it, “If this is full of snakes about to jump out at me…”

He rolled his eyes, “No, it’s even better. Just look, old man.”

Shouta opened the bag curiously, Vlad glancing over his shoulder, only to blink at the sight of dozens of vials of blood, each neatly labeled in Yaoyorozu’s handwriting, along with a notebook that could have been one of Deku’s, “Ok…explain.”

“We can’t go on this mission, we get that.” Uraraka piped up. “But since Toga’s quirk evolved during the attack, if she goes, then we can too…kinda. We each wrote down some tips for using our quirks too, so she can learn them faster!”

“There’s blood from 1B in there too.” Shinso added. “They didn’t want to be left out.”

“And we’re going to help save him.” Bakugo threatened. “It’s just up to you whether we have to be there to do that or not.”

“Problem children.” Shouta looked to Vlad in exhaustion, “It’s a decent plan, but she’s your daughter. It’s up to you.”

Vlad thought for a moment, “She’s been begging to go anyway and she’s more used to danger than the students are. If it keeps the rest of our kids out of danger, I’ll go along and make sure she doesn’t get hurt.”

Shouta turned back to the students, “Fine. You win. But if I hear of *anyone* leaving UA to go fight, I will not hesitate to expel them, do you hear me?”

“Loud and clear, old man.” Bakugo huffed.

“But remember we literally put our blood, sweat, and tears into this mission.” Shinso pointed out. “We’re relying on you to do the rest.”

Uraraka nodded, “Bring him home safe. Please.”

Shouta didn’t hesitate, “We will.”

The kids nodded and Shouta watched them leave, a headache already coming on, but it wasn't as bad as it could have been. At least the kids

had agreed to stay safe.

“You’ve gotta be proud of those kiddos, Eraser.” Vlad said. “That’s a pretty creative solution.”

“It’s alright, I guess.” Shouta griped stubbornly. “The kids have come a long way. Plus it gives me an idea. How’s Nedzu coming with the villains?”

Izuku bit his lip and tried not to grip the controller too tightly. He’d lost. He’d known he would, but despite his best efforts, he’d really only managed to stay alive for fifteen minutes in the game and now Shigaraki and Dabi were both leering at him like vultures ready for the carnage.

“Time to pay up kid.” Dabi’s grin pulled at his staples. “Info or pain. Your choice.”

“Like the brat’ll ever actually betray his precious heroes.” Shigaraki said. “Well, brat? We’re waiting.”

Izuku’s mouth was dry and he frantically looked around the room. There were no better escape routes than the last ten times he’d checked, so what info could he give that wouldn’t get someone killed? His train of thought crashed off the rails when his gaze caught on Shigaraki’s shoes. It wasn’t about heroes, but…he glanced toward the TV where All for One might be eavesdropping, but if what Dabi had said about the light was true then he wasn’t listening. Yet.

“We wear the same brand of shoe.” Izuku said carefully. “They’re specially made.”

Shigaraki scratched at his neck. “This again? I asked for info on heroes, you brat! Not fashion!”

“They’re specially made.” Izuku repeated slowly. “They have extra room in the toe for an extra toe joint. Only quirkless people find them comfortable.”

Shigaraki stopped scratching and stared at him in confusion, “What?”

Dabi started laughing, “You must really be desperate not to give us any actual information, you useless brat. If you hadn’t noticed, then you’re more stupid than I thought, but Shigaraki *definitely* has a quirk. He can prove it on your face if you’d like.”

Izuku ignored him, keeping his eyes on Shigaraki, “Your quirk came in late, didn’t it? You were probably already five when it finally appeared. When did you meet All for One? I bet it was around that same time, wasn’t it?”

“Shut up!” Shigaraki growled. “Sensei saved me!”

“Did he?” Izuku asked. “From what? Disintegration is extremely destructive and hard to control. I bet the first time it manifested was absolutely terrifying. Was that what he *saved* you from?”

“Wait a minute.” Dabi was no longer laughing as he looked between Izuku and Shigaraki. “What are you saying?”

“Don’t!” Shigaraki screamed. “Shut up! Shut up, shut up, shut up!”

Izuku knew that the smart thing to do would be to stop talking, but he’d already gone too far and he couldn’t stop the words from spilling out. “Disintegration was never your quirk, Shigaraki. All for One gave it to you with full knowledge of what it was and what it would do when it manifested. You were born quirkless just like me.”

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 05.25.2021

Execution

Chapter Summary

Trial and Judgement.

Chapter Notes

Art!
Blackwinged Angel

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The room was deathly silent in the wake of his pronouncement and Izuku could only kick himself and hope that the *deathly* part wasn't going to be literal. Why had he said all that?! What had he been thinking?!

aFter a few painfully long moments, the door opened with a bang and Twice walked in, followed closely by Magne, and shattered the silence, "Hey guys, why the long faces? Sounds like a party!"

It was enough to shake Dabi out of his funk and his voice practically dripped with venom, "So that bastard basically *created* Shigaraki to fit his own damn goals?"

Izuku gulped, "Y-yes? That, um, yeah, that seems to be the jist of it."

"Wait." Magne looked between Dabi and Shigaraki. "What's going on?"

Shigaraki was still frozen in shock, so it was Dabi who answered, "Shiggy here wasn't born with Distintigration. He could have had a normal, happy life outside of all this, but *no.* His precious sensei wanted a kid he could raise and manipulate into the perfect villain, so forced a goddamn cursed quirk on him!"

"No!" Twice gasped. "That doesn't sound bad at all!"

"And to top it all off, I bet the rest of us are just worthless pebbles on the side of the road next to his *masterpiece."* Dabi spat. "Shiggy's perfect Sensei is nothing but a selfish, abusive, manipulative piece of

shit, no better than…"

He cut himself off with a growl and Izuku eyed him warily as his hands burst into flames. Hopefully Kurogiri cared enough about his bar to protect it from Dabi's rage, but with how badly he was taking this Izuku wasn't sure they could count on that. He felt like he'd missed something somewhere. He'd been expecting violence from Shigaraki, but the rest of the league shouldn't be close enough to prompt this kind of sympathetic reaction, unless...unless Dabi had experienced something similar in the past.

He didn't have time to fully explore that revelation before Shigaraki recovered enough to start scratching his throat again, "No, Sensei wouldn't...would he? No, he...he saved me when those worthless heroes wouldn't!"

"You wouldn't have needed saving if that bastard didn't force his stupid quirk on you!" Dabi shouted.

"Now now," Kurogiri's calm voice cut through, "Let's just calm down and think about this. Young Tomura…"

"Sensei saved me…" Shigaraki sounded lost. "Why would he have…? Just to get me on his side?"

"I mean, he *is* a villain." Magne pointed out. "He manipulates everything. Is it really that odd that he would manipulate a kid and groom them into becoming what he needed?"

Izuku knew it was probably too early to be feeling hope, but with the way things were going, there was a chance the villains would turn on eachother and that might be his best chance to escape, so he gave it a little push, "By creating a situation where you needed to be saved, All for One would have gotten you to trust him instantly. You were a vulnerable little kid and he took advantage of that, knowing that you would do anything his savior told him. Even murder."

"That's…" Magne wrinkled her nose in disgust. "That's despicable. Doing that to a kid...Do we really work this monster?"

"Maybe the rest of you do." Dabi growled. "I'd rather burn this place to the ground than waste my life groveling to another abusive asshole."

Kurogiri looked around the room, "I don't want to believe it. Why would Sensei order me to protect and care for Tomura if he was the

one that was trying to harm him, but Deku does point out a concerning amount of evidence."

"Sensei's a great guy." Twice said. "He's a monster!"

"Sensei…" Shigaraki suddenly stopped scratching and Izuku leaned back as far as he could when he saw the crazed look in his eyes. "He did this to me! He killed them! He ruined my life!"

Dabi scoffed, "Taht's what we've been trying to tell you, you stupid dust bunny."

"So…?" Magne glanced toward the tv, making sure the light was still off before turning back to the group. "What are we gonna do about it?"

"I don't care about the rest of you, but I'm out." Dabi said. "I'm not staying if it means working under a bastard like *him."*

"I'm kinda in the same boat." Magne added. "I can go find a better boss that's not just gonna use me."

"Good riddance! Miss you never!" Twice whined. "No! I don't want you to go! Can we just get rid of Sensei instead?"

Izuku gasped and the room went silent. They looked at each other for a long moment before Dabi turned to Shigaraki and grinned, "I'm down if you are."

"I'm not sure a coup is the *best* plan." Kurogiri sighed. "But if it will protect you, Tomura, then I would recommend doing it quickly. The longer you deely, the more risky this course of action will become."

"Wait, are we really talking about killing All for One?" Magne whistled. "I mean, he deserves it, but you guys have got *balls.* "

"I wasn't serious!" Twice yelled. "Get the pitchforks! Let me at him!"

Kurogiri turned to Shigaraki, "You are the leader, young Tomura, the decision falls to you."

Izuku held his breath. This hadn't been where he thought this was going to go at all and he had mixed feelings about it. On the one hand, he didn't want to be responsible for someone's death, even a villain, but on the other...if the villains took themselves out, then that was less people that the heroes had to fight. So he just didn't say

anything. It was Shigaraki's decision to make.

"Kurogiri." Shigaraki took the hand off his face, allowing it to crumble in his grip. "I think it's time we pay *Sensei* a visit."

Kurogiri nodded and created a portal. Izuku had to hold back a smile. With the villains gone, he would have a better chance at maybe getting a signal out. He was still mostly untied from playing video games, so maybe he could use the gaming console to call Eraser? Or he might even be able to make a run for it, since All for One was probably not in this building, which meant that there wouldn't be anyone guarding him…

His hopes were dashed when Dabi grabbed him by the back of the neck with an uncomfortably hot hand, "Nah, kid, you get to see this. I mean, it's your fault this is happening anyway, so if things go sideways, it's only fair you die too, right? And we may as well show you what happens to people who cross us."

He squeezed Izuku's neck harder and forced him through the portal. The process was still as disorienting as ever and he let out a small squeak when he saw All for One, resting and surrounded by all the machines keeping him alive. It looked like he was out of the frying pan and into the fire. How in the world did he keep managing to make this situation worse for himself? It was honestly getting impressive at this point.

"Tomura." All for One didn't even turn to face them. "I thought I told you to rest until the next phase of our plan. Please, go enjoy your time, as it will be quite limited once our plans come to fruition."

"You mean *your* plans." Shigaraki accused. "I was never really your *successor* was I? I was just some kid that you could string along to be your little puppet."

Izuku froze as All for One spun in his chair so he was facing them, "What are you talking about, young Tomura? I have always had your best interests at heart. The heroes never saved you, I'm simply…"

"They wouldn't have had to if it wasn't for you." Dabi snapped. "You can't pat yourself on the back for saving someone you endangered in the first place."

"Yeah, we know what really happened." Magne said. "Stop trying to deny it. You were the one that gave Shigaraki his quirk in the first place, weren't you?"

Izuku could practically feel the bloodlust coming off of him in waves, but All for One was outwardly calm as he gave a tired sigh, “Deku is trying to poison your mind against me, isn’t he? I thought you were better than this, Tomura. You know the boy is a liar and a cheat. He’s the one who has been writing all those nasty articles, so it’s quite obvious to me that *he* is the true manipulator here.”

Izuku waited for Shigaraki to turn on him, but it didn’t happen. Instead, Shigaraki went completely silent, not looking at any of them as he walked around the room. The rest of them watched him like he was a dangerous animal, waiting for him to come to a decision and make his next move. He stopped right next to Izuku who tensed as Shigaraki stared contemplatively down at his own hand, “Sensei, you’ve always said that I can destroy anything I hate, right?”

“Yes, my child.” All for One sounded pleased and smiled slyly as Izuku’s stomach sank. “It’s your birthright.”

Shigaraki nodded and suddenly, his arm snapped out. Izuku instinctively flinched, closing his eyes as he waited for the feeling of his body disintegrating out from underneath him, but nothing happened. After a moment, he cracked one eye open and his jaw dropped.

Instead of grabbing Izuku, Shigaraki had reached out and put his whole hand on one of the life support machines lining the wall. He glared at All for One as the disintegration spread, and the interconnected machines all collapsed softly into dust as All for One sat staring at them in shock, “Then die.”

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: 06.01.2021

Escape

Chapter Summary

The league turns on itself.

Chapter Notes

Art!
A true gentlebee

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The moment that Dabi let go of his neck to join the fight, Izuku ran. He was vaguely aware of the chaos happening behind him, but his primary concern was getting out and getting away. There was only one door that he could see, so he kept low to the ground and went straight there, only to yank on it and realize it was locked. Was there another way out? He hadn't seen any windows and he didn't have anything on him that would help him pick the lock.

There was a small breeze, but that was all the warning he got before a wave of air slammed him through the wall. He groaned and gripped his ribs as he tried to stand up. Well, he supposed that solved the problem of getting out of the room, but it also meant that the fight was no longer contained and he did *not* want to be around to see what kind of damage the league of villains was capable of when they were seriously going for the kill.

The marble in his shoe dug painfully into the side of his foot as he ran, but if there was one skill that years of enduring bullies had given him, it was ignoring the pain in favor of surviving. Izuku scrambled around buildings and tried to dodge the rubble that was being thrown his direction, but he didn't get far before a stray stream of blue flames almost hit him and he had to scramble backwards. The fire hit the pole of a billboard, which would probably have been fine except for the fact that the pole was wood and All for One's next attack shook the ground. Izuku tried to get out of the way and almost managed it, but a thin layer of dust from both Shigaraki's quirk and from the general destruction was already starting to coat everything and it was just enough to make him slip and he vaguely heard himself scream as

it came down on his leg.

Izuku hissed as he tried to pull his leg out, but his leg was definitely broken and he didn't have a quirk like Uraraka's that would let him lift the thing off him. He desperately looked around for anything that could help him. Maybe if he could cut through the pole then…

"Well that was quick." Dabi's voice floated through the sudden eerie silence. "I would've thought the king of the underworld would have had more fight in him."

"Well, Shiggy *did* destroy his life support." Magne observed blandly. "And I'm sure all this dust didn't help any."

"Not to mention that you blew up his extra oxygen tank! So cool!" Twice yelled. "That was below the belt!"

"Shut up." Shigaraki cut in. "Where's the brat?"

Izuku struggled twice as hard, gritting his teeth and ignoring the black encroaching on the edges of his vision as he tried to yank his leg out from where it was trapped. He could hear them spreading out and it was only a matter of time before they found him. But would he even be able to run if he did? If he escaped and they found him…

"Aww, how cute!" Magne gushed. "He's like a little rat caught in a trap."

Izuku's shoulders slumped in...well, disappointment seemed too mild, so he wasn't quite sure what he was feeling besides dread as what remained of the league surrounded him. Shigaraki was limping and about half of Dabi's staples had torn through his skin, but they were obviously alive and strong enough that recapturing an idiot kid who had already gotten himself pinned was as easy as taking candy from a baby. Shigaraki grinned as he crouched down to look Izuku in the eye, "Well, well, it seems like the quirkless weakling can't even run away correctly. And now that Sensei is out of the way, I can do whatever the hell I want."

Shouta looked around at the chaos and grit his teeth in frustration, "What even happened here?"

"The nearest we can tell is that the league somehow turned on themselves." Tsukauchi answered. "We're just lucky this didn't happen at night when this area is busy, but with this much destruction the

rescue teams are going to have to work overtime. Not to mention all the half-complete Nomus they're pulling from the wreckage."

"And the body they found at the epicenter?" Shouta asked. "Deku was here. We saw the tracker move. There's a possibility they found it and took it with them and the body was burned and disintegrated, so an accurate identification would be…"

"It wasn't him." Tsukauchi cut him off. "We put the autopsy on rush order, and the body they found was a quirked adult, not a quirkless teenager, and the cause of death was actually suffocation, everything else appeared to be overkill. All Might is on his way to make sure, but we suspect that the body we found was All for One."

Shouta let out a slow breath, "So Deku is at the current tracker location?"

"He should be." Tsukauchi nodded. "Is everyone ready? Did you get the league to cooperate?"

"Nedzu is surprisingly good at persuading people, especially the ones who actually want to change society." Shouta said. "Everyone is ready, we all just need to get into position."

Tsukauchi gave a sad smile, "You know, we're lucky this is the first time he's been kidnapped. If the villains had caught wind of him back when we still thought he was a retired pro-hero…"

"Well they didn't." Shouta said firmly. "Now if you'll excuse me, I need to go save my kid."

"Killing him would be a waste when we can use him for ransom money!" Dabi yelled.

Shigaraki looked unhinged, "We can finally kill the brat and you want to just *give him back?!"*

Izuku's leg throbbed as he listened to the league rehash the same arguments for what was probably the fifth time since he was recaptured. He'd been tied to a chair again and would have been trying to support Dabi's argument if he didn't think calling the league poor would get him killed. Kurogiri and Magne didn't seem to have an opinion on his fate either way and Twice agreed with both at the same time, so Izuku's fate was in the hands of a serial arsonist who hated his guts, and an unstable serial killer who actively wanted him dead.

At least they were still arguing.

“Even if he wasn’t an annoying little brat, do you really want to give him to the enemy party?” Shigaraki hissed. “What happens when he levels up? Do you want to fight a boss version of him later?!”

“Like he could even do any damage.” Dabi rolled his eyes. “The kid’s quirkless! Any one of us could overpower him in our sleep.”

“Fine, but if we wait, then those stupid heroes might…” Shigaraki froze as the door opened and all the villains turned to face the intruder, ready to accack.

Izuku tensed as he pitied the poor person who must have wandered in by accident, but it turned out that he needn’t have worried, since the newcomer was far from innocent. The rest of the league relaxed slightly as Mr. Compress put his hands up in surrender, “Now, now dear cast members, is that really a way to treat a friend? I’m not one of those nasty heroes that deserves your wrath.”

“Shigaraki doesn’t *care* who deserves his wrath.” Dabi bit out. “He just wants to kill everything, even if it means shooting ourselves in the foot!”

“Yeah? Well this hobo apparently just *loves* pain, because he wants to let this stupid headache live!” Shigaraki gestured wildly at Izuku, who flinched. “We can do whatever we want now that Sensei’s gone and I want him dead!”

“I am glad to see you're alright.” Kurogiri said calmly. “How did you escape the heroes’ custody?”

“Oh, you know that a magician never reveals his secrets.” Mr. Compress chuckled. “But I’m sure you’ve heard of that trick where the lady is cut in half. So much blood, you know. Forgive me for missing my cue, but I felt it best to lay low until the audience stopped screaming for an encore.”

Izuku’s stomach sank. If one of the villains had escaped, had his classmates gotten caught up in it? Had they been hurt? Someone had been, if Izuku was understanding correctly, and he felt sick with guilt for hoping desperately that it wasn’t someone he knew. This was all his fault.

“Good work.” Twice gave one thumbs up and one middle finger. “You suck!”

Mr. Compress turned to Izuku, “I see you succeeded in our objective.”

“Yeah, but these two idiots can’t decide what to do with the kid.” Magne rolled her eyes. “What do you think? Do we ransom the brat and kill him later, or just get it over with?”

Compress hummed thoughtfully and leaned close to Izuku, “I don’t know...what do you think boy?”

Izuku gulped, “I think you guys need the money.”

Compress lifted his mask so that Izuku, and only izuku, could see his grin and he stared in shock as his face *melted away* . Izuku had barely enough time to catch a glimpse of fangs and yellow eyes before the disguise snapped back into place. Toga straightened, brushing imaginary dust off of Mr. Compress’s coat as she turned around, “Poor boy, can’t even handle a small act of intimidation.”

Izuku’s mind whirled. They’ve gotten the villain’s blood. Toga was here, that meant that the heroes couldn’t be that far behind, right? They were coming to save him, he just had to hold out a little bit longer. Just a little bit longer. He could do that.

Twice looked at Toga suspiciously, “You’re a two-face. Don’t trust him!”

Everyone stopped and Izuku swallowed thickly. This wasn’t good.

“What do you mean?” Kurogiri asked slowly. “Mr. Compress is one of us.”

“If Twice is agreeing with himself, that’s never a good sign.” Magne pointed out.

“A two-face knows a two-face.” Twice insisted. “That’s a fucking imposter!”

Toga sighed and she was pouting as she allowed Mr. Compress to melt away, “Aw, you’re no fun. I liked being him!”

The league instantly fell into battle stances, but before they could do anything, they were all frozen in Todoroki’s ice. Izuku’s jaw dropped, “You can use their quirks?!”

Toga’s grin looked odd on Todoroki’s face as she looked over her shoulder at him, “I can use their quirks! Watch this!”

She ran forward and met Shigaraki's attack with a simple sheet of metal. Her shield wasn't as complex or strong as one of Yaoyorozu's but Izuku supposed iron was simple enough to understand for someone with a blood based quirk. The shield disintegrated away, but Toga had already partially shifted into Shoji and grabbed Shigaraki by the leg, throwing him into the air. To everyone's surprise, he stayed there.

"The fun thing about heroes is the sheer variety!" Toga grinned with Sero's face as she started wrapping Shigaraki up. "Ochako's quirk is super cute! It almost makes up for the other kid's ugly elbows!"

Seconds later, she was Tokoyami and her own version of Dark Shadow nipped at Shigaraki's ankle as Dabi extended his arm.

"Toga!" Izuku cried out. "Todoroki or Katsuki!"

She managed to switch just in time and Katsuki pouted as she glared at Dabi, "That was *super* uncute. I'll get to you, just wait your turn."

"Shut up, you weirdo." Dabi growled. "And seriously, you're switching to the frog next? Against a fire user? Really?"

"I'm not using Tsu-chan to *fight* you!" Toga giggled as she shot out her tounge and lapped a drop of blood from where she'd injured Shigaraki's ankle. "I'm using her to free *him!"*

Izuku tensed as Shigaraki's hand reached toward him, but Toga just grabbed the chair he was tied to. Izuku fell onto his butt and shimmied out of what was left of the ropes as the real Shigaraki finally managed to get a good hand on the tape.

"You cheater!" Shigaraki screamed. "You cheating mimic! Die!"

"Hmm, no thanks!" Toga spun a sparking knife between her fingers as she turned into Kaminari. "I'm here to save my friend."

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: June 8, 2021

Blood

Chapter Summary

The hideout raid.

Chapter Notes

Art!
Blackwinged_angel

Memes!
X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Toga grinned and shoved her electrified knife into the light switch on the wall and Izuku flinched as the lights surged and then went out. Then there was a crash and Izuku covered his head as the wall was blown apart beside him. Light filtered in from the street lamps outside and Izuku could see several figures silhouetted against the darkness, but he didn't have the time to tell which heroes they were as he army-crawled toward the new opening.

A pair of boots stepped in front of him and Izuku looked up, finally letting some Midoriya tears fall when Eraserhead crouched down in front of him, "Hey problem child, this is a pretty big mess you've gotten yourself into."

Izuku sniffed, "Let me guess, I'm grounded?"

Eraser smiled, "Definitely. Now come on, let's get you back to the school so you can serve your sentence properly, ok?"

Izuku nodded frantically and tried to stand up, but his broken leg collapsed under his weight and Eraser had to catch him, using his capture weapon to strap him to his back. Izuku heard Shigaraki start laughing hysterically and froze in terror, "That's not a good sign."

"Are you sure?" Eraser smirked into his capture weapon. "Did you really think you could just get kidnapped and not have everyone show up to save you?"

Izuku's eyes widened, "Everyone?"

Eraser nodded, “Nighteye even peeked into Toga’s future before she left to make sure we had everything we needed.”

Izuku perked up, “And do we?”

“Almost.” Eraser said. “We just need a bit of Kurogiri’s blood.”

Izuku’s eyes were finally starting to adjust to the low light and the wheels in his head started turning as he took note of Ms. Joke, Mr. Brave, and Lemillion alongside the other heroes that had come to save him, “Joke! Use your quirk on Kurogiri!”

Joke grinned in response and Kurogiri’s deep laugh echoed around the room. Izuku leaned forward slightly, “Le Million! Use Blackwhip to hold him!”

“Will do, Deku!” Mirio grinned and wrapped the warper up, the darkness making it hard to tell where one quirk stopped and other started. “Got him!”

Izuku grinned, “Toga! Now!”

The other heroes held off the rest of the league as Toga shifted into Tsu and leapt forward over the fight. Kurogiri was still under Joke’s hold, so his response was just delayed enough that Toga was able to switch back and slide a knife between two of his armor plates, wiping the blood off with her hand and licking it off her fingers with a smile.

“Party’s over.” Eraser said quietly. “We win.”

“What?” Izuku looked around the room. “Already? How?”

He screamed as the floor suddenly dropped out from underneath them and he curled himself tighter around Eraser, burying his face in his shoulder as he braced for impact. The jolt was much gentler than expected and Izuku opened his eyes when someone started poking his cheek, “Deku? Are you ok?”

Izuku gasped, “Uraraka?! What are you…You shouldn’t have come!”

Uraraka giggled, “I didn’t *come* anywhere. You’re safe now, Deku.”

“We’re back at UA.” Eraser said gruffly. “Nighteye foresaw Toga using Kurogiri’s quirk, so we made sure she knew the exact location of here, as well as several special holding cells in Tartarus for the rest of the league. As soon as she got his blood, she warped us here and dropped

the rest of them straight into custody. You did good kid."

"Don't praise him, Aizawa." Recovery Girl griped as she slammed open the door. "Now as for you, I hear you thought it was a good idea to sacrifice yourself! Of all the stupid, idiotic ways to get your self injured…"

Izuku shrunk in on himself as Eraser set him down on the bed, "Sorry Recovery Girl. It won't happen again."

"It better not." Uraraka warned. "We don't want to lose you, Izuku."

He smiled sheepishly, "Sorry."

Recovery Girl kept grumbling under her breath as she took a look at Izuku's leg and Uraraka sat down beside him and squeezed his hand, "Thanks for coming back."

Izuku shrugged, "Thanks for helping save me. I saw Toga turn into you a few times."

"Good." Uraraka said firmly. "I mean, we all gave her our blood. It was the only way Aizawa could keep up from showing up in person."

"Thanks for not doing that." Izuku felt his eyelids start drooping as the adrenaline washed out of him like a wave. "Uh...I don't...I'm glad you're safe…"

He yawned and Uraraka giggled, "Get some rest Sleepyhead. You deserve it."

Izuku nodded and slumped against her, asleep before his head even hit her shoulder.

You are cleared to proceed. Target is about two hundred feet ahead.

Aoyama smiled and put his phone away, grateful that Nedzu had suggested he cultivate a good relationship with the marketing students. It had been their idea to manage some *leaks* before the press conference later, and who was better for the job than the sparkling spokesman of 1A?

Of course, they'd had to approve the plan with Nedzu, who had been delighted by their proactive thinking and even more pleased with their plan to turn the talking points in their favor. The current narrative that the media had been running with was that of Deku as a

weak victim, so if they could introduce a few strategic truths to the debate right when the kidnapping was the only thing that anyone was talking about, then they might be able to set the tone for the questioning this afternoon.

Aoyama strolled along the street, making sure that the reporter the marketing team had identified, Taneo Takuda, saw him before he walked into the coffee shop. He stood in line, keeping an eye on Takuda out of the corner of his eye as he gave the barista his order and waited for his cup, smiling in satisfaction when he saw the reporter fall into line a few people behind him. After he got his drink and sat down, it didn't take long for Takuda to take the bait and slide into the booth across from him with his own coffee, "Hey, it's pretty busy today, I hope you don't mind me sitting here?"

"Oh, non, Monsieur!" Aoyama assured him. "It's not a bother at all!"

They both sipped their drinks in silence for a few moments before Takuda made his next move, "So...forgive me if I'm being rude, but I think I recognize you from the UA sports festival. Class 1A, right?"

"Oui." Aoyama put down his drink. "It is such a sparkling class, don't you think? So many future heroes shining brightly enough that it's practically blinding, non?"

Takuda nodded enthusiastically, "I was happy to hear they saved your classmate. You know, the quirkless one that got kidnapped."

Aoyama laughed, carefully keeping the look of displeasure off his face, "Oh, monsieur, you make it sound like he didn't do half the work!"

Takuda's eyes widened, "Really? Perhaps I'm missing a part of the story. How about you enlighten me."

"Well, I'm not really sure I'm supposed to say anything…" Aoyama said bashfully. "You are a reporter, non? Why else would you be so curious?"

Takuda smiled and put his hands up in surrender, "Alright, you got me, but I'd be willing to keep your name out of it, if you'd prefer. Just an unnamed, anonymous source at UA, how does that sound?"

It sounded exactly vague enough to start circulating ideas without making them seem like the opinions of a single student, "Well, I suppose…"

Takuda pulled out a notebook, “So? You say Deku did half the work?”

Aoyama smiled, “Oui! When he sacrificed himself for the rest of us, he knew he was going to be taken by those fiends, but he at least had the good sense to take a tracker along with him. With their very location being broadcast, the league, well, they didn’t have anywhere to run to!”

Takuda made a few notes, the interest in his eyes clear, “Did you say that he sacrificed himself? What do you mean by that?”

“I’m not sure I should say…” Aoyama bit his lip. “But I’m sure you’re aware that Deku is quite the talented strategist, non? He even caught the attention of our dear principal Nezu! Well, I’m afraid he caught the attention of the league as well...they gave him the choice to come quietly or...well, I’m sure we’re all grateful that there weren’t any major casualties.”

Takuda looked like he’d hit the jackpot and Aoyama hid a satisfied smile behind his hand. Those details were juicy enough that they would catch everyone’s attention and introduce the idea of Deku being the hero he was, rather than a biologically weak victim like everyone was predisposed to think he was.

“Of course.” Aoyama continued. “The rest of us did our best to help with the rescue, but our support was mostly from the sidelines, as we won’t be getting our licenses until the next exam. Still, our class is quite impressive, non?”

“Extremely.” Takuda grinned. “Thanks for the off record interview, kid. I owe you one.”

Aoyama watched him leave and smiled as he took a sip of his coffee, “No, thank *you.”*

Tsukauchi looked over the paperwork for the league of villain arrests. A big part of him couldn’t believe that had actually worked, but another part of him knew never to doubt one of Deku’s plans, or in this case, plans inspired by Deku. With the entire power of class 1A and the righteous fury of the hero underground against them, the league hadn’t stood a chance. Kurogiri had been the most difficult to take down, but after Toga had warped away the rest of the league, he didn’t have any exact locations to be able to retrieve them, so he couldn’t just leave without his teammates. He’d slowed down from the bloodloss, so they were able to overpower him in the end, and he was

currently being held and observed in Tartarus, just like the others they'd captured during the raid.

Which led to Tsukauchi's current frustration. As part of their intake into Tartarus, each of the league had undergone a physical and a host of tests and there were some…interesting revelations hidden in the results. Tsukauchi didn't even know how to begin breaching the subject of Shigaraki being Nana Shimura's grandson with All Might, so he figured he'd do the smaller revelation first. Or, well, not smaller, but not directly tied to his best friend and his mystery quirk.

Eraser let the phone ring several times before picking up, "Tsukauchi, I swear to god! Whatever this is, couldn't it wait a day or two."

"It could, but I don't think you want it to." Tsukauchi responded seriously. "The genetic tests turned up something concerning about Kurogiri's true identity."

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: June 15, 2021

Public Perception

Chapter Summary

Aftermath.

Chapter Notes

Art!
that-one-mimic
the biggest fangirl

Memes!
X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Tragic Hero

In ancient times, long before quirk or even modern conveniences were even imagined, there was a trope in greek theater about a tragic hero. It was a character who had high potential and who should have had the world in their hands, but fell from grace because of their own hubris and tragic flaws. Is there any other way to describe Endeavor's recent downfall?

A press conference earlier today revealed that Dabi, a serial arsonist and member of the league of villains, was revealed to be Touya Todoroki. Endeavor's oldest son was reported dead almost ten years ago at the age of thirteen, but that is obviously not the case. It remains to be seen whether that story was a coverup by Endeavor or whether he, too, genuinely believed his son was dead. Even if that is the case however, it begs the question: how bad must a father be that his son, so grievously injured that he should have died, would choose to recover on the streets rather than returning home?

Sadly, though, this doesn't come as a surprise. After Endeavor's defeat by Stain and with his track record, it was only a matter of time before the evidence became too much to ignore, which is why his arrest, which a year ago would have been the only newsworthy story for two weeks, was completely overshadowed by that of his son and his band of murderous misfits.

Hero arrests always make the news, but Endeavor was never truly a hero, was he?

“I thought you were supposed to be resting! What are we supposed to do with you, Deku, when you won’t even take care of yourself?!”

Izuku winced as Sir Nighteye’s voice carried through the hospital, “I feel fine, Nighteye! And look! I’m in bed! That means I’m resting, right?”

“Nice try kid.” Eraser huffed. He seemed more tired than usual today, but he had evaded the question when Izuku tried to bring it up. “You realize we all saw the article you published, right? Taking down the former number two hero does not count as resting.”

“Oh…” Izuku blushed. “Uh...I mean, it was just an article, it’s not as if I was walking on my broken leg or anything, so I don’t think that should count.”

“It’s still mental work, kiddo, so yeah, it counts.” Ms. Joke ruffled his hair. “If Shinso broke *his* leg, would you want him brainwashing people left and right?”

Izuku sighed in defeat, “No…”

“But scolding aside,” Mr. Brave grinned, “that *was* pretty cool!”

“Brave!”

“What?” Brave shrugged innocently. “Kid gets kidnapped, turns his captors on eachother, somehow rids the world of, like, the worst villain to ever live, then turns around and takes down an abusive hero the next day. You can’t say that isn’t cool!”

“Don’t encourage him.” Eraser hissed.

“Yeah.” Joke agreed. “And I think you’re forgetting that All for One’s death wasn’t intentional on the kid’s part, be sensitive.”

“Oh…” Brave glanced toward him. “Right.”

Izuku balled his fists into the sheets, “He wasn’t a good person. I know that. But the worst part is that I led to someone’s death and *I didn’t even care.* At the time, I was just thinking *better him than me.* Does that make me a bad person?”

Eraser’s hand on his shoulder was grounding and Izuku let a few tears drop as he felt befi squeeze, “Kid, I think it’s probably high time we got you some therapy.”

“I…” Izuku started to protest, then stopped himself. He was going to be a hero. They learned in rescue classes how traumatic things like kidnappings or hostage situations could be to civilians, so what made him think he was better than anyone else at handling this. If it were Katsuki or Uraraka, Izuku would obviously encourage them to get some help, at least for the first couple of weeks, so what made him any different? He took a deep breath, “I think you might be right.”

“So…” Toga leaned over the couch while Ochako was watching TV, “how’s the big bad media taking the rescue.”

“Surprisingly well.” Ochako sighed. “Better than they took the kidnapping at least.”

Toga’s face twisted in disgust, “I can’t believe they were blaming him for getting kidnapped. He literally sacrificed himself to save everyone and they were acting like he was some damsel in distress. Super uncute!”

“Yeah, well, some people are just prejudiced.” Ochako slumped back. “I don’t get how Deku deals with it everyday. I would snap!”

Toga nodded somberly, “I would definitely stab someone.”

“I’m just glad we’re in the dorms and he doesn’t have to take the train anymore.” Ochako said. “There were just so many times he would come in, casually saying that someone had given him a death threat or told him that he would never be a hero. I can’t even imagine.”

“I guess it’s a good thing Deku’s so strong then.” Toga shrugged and jumped over the couch to sit next to her. “Maybe that’s why you like him so much!”

“What?!” Ochako stammered. “I don’t...I mean, how did you…”

Toga giggled, “It’s not a bad thing, Ochako! Having crushes is super cute, and Deku’s a cutie-pie, so you picked a good one!”

Ochako sighed, “I don’t know. Even if he likes me back, which isn’t a guarantee, we’re both so busy being heroes…”

Toga sat up so that she was nose to nose with Ochako, “You’re never too busy for love. You’re just too scared, but heroes aren’t cowards, get it?”

Ochako leaned back, eyes wide, “Got it.”

Toga smiled, her fangs on full display, “Good! Now let’s watch a movie, the news is so boring!”

Mr. Compress looked around the room, wondering why they had all been gathered. Well, not *all* of them. Muscular and Moonfish hadn’t been invited to this little rendezvous, but then again they hadn’t agreed to give blood to the vampire and turncoat on the league. Shortly after Compress had been led here, officers had arrived leading Spinner and Mustard, who had been dropped off with little explanation. They had simply been told to wait for the heroes, who had an offer for them.

“What do you think it is this time?” Mustard asked. “They already arrested Shigaraki, and All for One is dead. So what else do they want from us?”

“I don’t know.” Spinner said. “But the ones we’ve been meeting with seem like true heroes. They’re trying to save people, not accumulate worthless glory.”

“I am glad you think so!” Nedzu piped up behind them.

They jumped to their feet to see the principal of UA smiling at them. They hadn't even realized that the door had opened. Eraserhead was standing in the open doorway, and the boy standing behind him could be none other than Deku, the one they were supposed to kidnap and ended up saving instead.

“Well,” Compress said cautiously, “if I’d known there would be a party, I would have worn a nicer coat.”

Nedzu chuckled, “Then perhaps you’ll have to come over for tea another day so we can see it.”

“That’ll be pretty hard to do, seeing as we’re going to prison and all.” Mustard rolled his eyes. “So thanks, but no thanks.”

“Actually, the commission is a little more lenient when they’re desperate.” Eraserhead rolled his eyes. “And with everything that’s been going on, they’re giving the green light to things without reading the full terms and conditions, but that’s their loss, so let’s talk.”

Compress glanced between the heroes in confusion, “I am afraid that I

find myself a tad lost. From my observations, the commission did not seem *desperate* to save a quirkless student, no offense to young Deku here."

"None taken." Deku said. "If they hadn't had a team of heroes pushing to save me, the Commission would probably have been happy to make me a martyr and let people keep thinking that quirkless equals useless. That's partly why I need to thank you. Without your help, it would have been much more difficult for Toga to enter the league's hideout undetected, so thank you. I owe you my life."

Mustard looked shocked and Compress could have sworn that Spinner was *blushing,* "Uh...It's no big deal. Just what true heroes would do, right? Like Stain taught!"

"Exactly." Nedzu said. "However, the commission is not necessarily fond of the place that Stain has taken in the hearts and minds of the people of Japan. That's where you come in."

"Really?" Mustard snorted. "I doubt they'd like a bunch of villains any more."

"But you're not a bunch of villains." Deku smiled. "At least not according to public perception. My kidnapping was better news than your capture, so your information was never released and as his followers, you know Stain's ideology better than anyone."

Spinner looked at him suspiciously, "What are you getting at?"

Deku's smile got wider, "Society needs to change, we all know that, but you've read the articles I wrote. Murder isn't going to be enough. The fight for a true hero society can't be fought with knives and swords."

Nedzu nodded in agreement, "To win hearts and minds, one must be prepared to use words as weapons."

"So, you want us to...what?" Mustard asked.

"Be the face of a *new* ideology." Deku said. "But really, it's just a repackaging. Keep the portions of Stain's ideals that make society better and spin it so that it sounds like it's coming from the civilian side, rather than villains. It will make the changes seem a bit more conservative and get more people on board."

"Basically, the plan is for you to become social media sensations and

popularize a rebranded version of Stain's ideals." Eraser explained bluntly. "Who knows if it'll work, but it'll count as community service while you serve house arrest."

Compress exchanged glances with the other two before grinning, "Then let's put on a show."

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: June 22, 2021 (MDT)

Reveal

Chapter Summary

Important conversations are had.

Chapter Notes

Art!
CardinalCat

Memes!
X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Toshinori felt lost. Mirio had ordered ramen to celebrate their nemesis defeat, which was a sweet gesture, and there *was* something surreal about sitting here in an empty classroom, eating ramen with his protege as the sun set though the windows, but it just felt...perhaps empty was the best word to describe it, or maybe hollow. It didn't feel real or anything like what he had expected, that was for sure, and it didn't even feel like the first time he had assumed, incorrectly of course, that All for One was gone for good. That first time, he'd been busy recovering from his injuries and he had taken the symbol of evil down with his own two hands, so if he had had the time to process it, it would have felt *real* and *complete* somehow.

But he hadn't been the one to take his nemesis down. It hadn't even been Mirio. No, All for One had been taken down by his own hubris and the people he had seen as mere puppets in his plan with one very important catalyst. Izuku Midoriya.

"I used to be quirkless, you know." Toshinori broke the silence. "Before I met Nana and received One for All."

Mirio set down his spoon, "I think you mentioned that."

Toshinori nodded absently as he played with his food, "I had a dream of becoming the symbol of peace, but I couldn't do that without a quirk. Or at least I thought I couldn't. Now I'm not so sure."

"It would have been more difficult." Mirio acknowledged. "But just because you got an amazing quirk doesn't mean you're any weaker, All Might. You're still an amazing hero!"

Toshinori smiled sadly, “Thank you, my boy, but I am not sure that is entirely true. I took the easy path.”

“And you took it well.” Miro insisted. “You’ve done a lot of good All Might! Sure, maybe you could still have accomplished all your goals if you stayed quirkless like Deku, and that would have been super awesome, but just because you received a quirk that made your life easier doesn’t mean that you didn’t have to work hard to get where you are. You’re the symbol of peace for a reason, All Might. You might have made some mistakes, but you’re working on them and stuff, right? So that’s what being a hero is all about. Making the world a better place, starting with ourselves!”

Toshinori chuckled, “You always know just what to say, don’t you my boy?”

Mirio shrugged, “I mean, there’s a reason you chose me and it’s not just because Sir told you to. You *liked* that I could be happy and bring hope, right? It’s why you chose me as your successor.”

Toshinori sighed, “I’m just wondering if I should have passed it on at all. It’s obviously not as miraculous as I originally believed if All for One could be taken down by any old…”

“Whoa, stop right there.” Mirio shook his head fondly. “Just because Deku is quirkless doesn’t mean All for One wasn’t strong. One for All is still an amazing legacy. Deku’s accomplishments don’t discount that.”

“Oh…” Toshinori blinked, then rubbed the back of his neck and chuckled awkwardly. “I suppose I’m falling into those biases again, aren’t I?”

“Yeah.” Mirio shrugged. “But you’re trying and that counts for a lot. Now come on and pass me a little more rice. We’re supposed to be celebrating.”

“Yes, we are.” Toshinori laughed. “Yes, we are.”

Emi hadn’t said anything since she arrived. The minute she’d gotten to his apartment, she’d taken off her shoes and brewed them both a cup of tea, then simply cuddled into his side, browsing her phone as he finished up with the last of the paperwork from the raid. If someone had asked him a year ago if Ms. Joke was capable of being silent, he would have called it a logical ruse, but maybe that was why he had

been so afraid of falling in love with her. Because then what happened if his thoughts and inner conflicts were loud enough to be overwhelming all on their own?

He missed Oboro. He missed what he'd had with him and Hizashi and he'd mourned that loss already, so having it all shoved in his face again, this time turned completely on its head, felt like having a rug pulled out from underneath him. It was just like when he'd thought that Oboro was cheering him on, only to find out that he'd *died.* Except he hadn't. Not really. It sucked.

"We don't even have him back." The thought slipped out of Shouta's mouth before he could stop it. "He's changed too much and All for One messed with his brain. He's not the kid I knew anymore, Emi."

Emi sat up and grabbed his hand, "I know, but are you really ready to give up on him? I know I never got the chance to know him, but from what you and Mic have said, he sounds like a really great guy."

"He *was."* Shouta said helplessly. "But he's been a villain for the past ten years. The Oboro I know wouldn't have done that."

"But you said it yourself, All for One messed with his brain." Emi said. "Maybe now that he's gone, there's a chance you can get your friend back."

"And what then?" Shouta asked. "What if we *do* get him back and he's still different, or *I'm* different and we don't just fit together easily like we did back at UA...."

Emi cut him off by squeezing his hand tightly, "Then you'll find a way to make it work. We're not a perfect match, are we? And we still found a way."

Shouta rolled his eyes, "You mean you found a way. You just kept attacking my walls head on until there was a large enough gap for you to squeeze your way in. it was a war of attrition."

Emi giggled, "Ok, *maybe.* But still, give it a chance, Shou. If not for your sake, for his. Or Mic's."

"Why do you have to come at me with logic?" Shouta groaned. "How would we even begin to find out how much of Kurogiri is still Oboro though and how much was All for One?"

"Well, All for One isn't the only person we know with a habit of

messing with people's brains." Emi said playfully.

Shouta narrowed his eyes, "If you're making a joke about my logical ruses…"

Emi snorted, "No, you're not *that* good. I was thinking about Shinso."

Shouta sat up straight, "You think he could brainwash All for One's influence out of him!"

Emi shrugged, "It's worth a try. Besides, the kid is getting too good at jokes and pick-up lines. He needs something to keep him out of trouble at this point."

Shouta nodded and slumped against the couch, "I'll talk to him tomorrow."

Emi gave him a sly smile, "I already did. He'll be at the hospital at noon. Good luck, Shou."

"Psst! Deku! Come here!" Uraraka's voice coming from his balcony made Izuku yelp and jump off the bed, hitting the floor with a hard *thud.*

He rubbed his tailbone as he hobbled outside, "Uraraka? Is everything alright? Is there a fight somewhere? What's going on?"

Uraraka giggled and grabbed his hand, "It's not an attack, silly! I just wanted to show you something. Do you trust me?"

Izuku breathed a sigh of relief and relaxed as Uraraka activated her quirk on him, "Yeah, I do. Where are you taking me?"

"Oh, no place *too* far, Eraserhead would kill me!" Uraraka gave a big grin and a few warning bells went off in his brain. "It's just the roof, so stop being such a worrywort!"

Izuku frowned, "Since when do you call Aizawa Eraserhead…"

He trailed off and his eyes widened as he saw the rooftop. One a blanket laid out with candles and what looked like pints of ice cream, Uraraka was already waiting for him. She turned around when she heard him gasp, "Deku? I was starting to...oh."

Toga giggled as she let go of Izuku and gave him back his gravity before shifting back into herself, grabbing a robe from behind a

planter to cover herself up, “You two have fun! I didn’t know what kind of ice cream you guys liked, so I got strawberry for Ochako, cause you’re so sweet, and mint chocolate chip for Deku, cause it matches your hair! Have fun on your date! Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do!”

Uraraka glanced at him with panicked eyes and jumped up, “Toga! Wait!”

It was already too late, though, since she’d already taken a vial from the pocket of the robe and downed it’s contents, shifting into Hagakure and disappearing as the robe fell to the floor again. The only sign she’d left was the door closing behind her, the lock echoing across the roof as it clicked closed. Both Izuku and Uraraka ran to the door, only to find it locked.

“Dang it.” Izuku frowned. “Do you have a hair pin? I left my lock picking kit in my room.”

Uraraka shook her head, “I was wearing a ponytail today, so no. Um, I guess the grappling hook’s with your costume?”

“Yeah.” Izuku huffed. “We could use your quirk?”

Uraraka grimaced, “Uh…kinda overdid during sparring earlier. So *possible,* but it wouldn’t be pretty and the ice cream would probably melt by the time we both got out of the shower.”

Izuku matched her face, “Yeah, maybe not. Uh…so how did Toga get you?”

Uraraka blushed, “Well, I thought she was you and she said she had something to…”

“Show you on the roof.” Izuku sighed. “I didn’t even question it until we were already in the air.”

“Well, I guess I’m glad you trust me so much.” Uraraka giggled. “But, uh…it kinda got us trapped. Aizawa’s gonna give you detention for getting kidnapped again.”

Izuku shot her a playful glare, “Don’t forget you’ll be right there with me.”

“I’m with you right now, aren’t I?” Uraraka’s eyes widened and she looked away, “Uh, any idea what Toga’s goal was with this whole

logical ruse thing?"

Now it was Izuku's turn to blush, "Uh, I'm pretty sure she said it was a date? I'm, uh, not really sure why she thought *that* , not that I don't like you. I do! I mean, I don't! I mean...um, I'm sure it's faster if I just jump, right? That'll be the quickest way down."

Uraraka laughed, "Has Toga been teasing you about having a crush too? She's been trying to get me to just *grab the bull by the horns,* but, uh...I guess she got tired of waiting."

"Yeah. Toga isn't very well known for patience." Izuku agreed, then did a double take. "Wait, did you just say *crush?!"*

"Um...maybe?" Uraraka huffed and her face filled with determination. "You know what? Yeah. Toga already spilled the beans anyway, so might as well face it head on, right? Deku. I like you."

Izuku gulped, "Oh."

Uraraka nodded, "Yeah. And if you don't feel the same way then that's fine, but…"

"No!" Izuku waved his hands frantically. "I mean, yes? I mean, anyone would like you, you're smart and pretty and a really good fighter and...wait, does this mean I should call you Ochako now? Or does that come after ice cream?"

Ochako blushed and ducked her head, "You can call me Ochako if you want, Deku. I...I think it's cute."

"Ok." Izuku's mouth felt dry and he had no idea what to do with his hands, so he ended up just gesturing awkwardly to the blanket. "Uh, so...shall we?"

Ochako giggled and grabbed his hand, pulling him down onto the blanket as she sat down, "We shall."

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: June 29, 2021 (MDT)

Goal

Chapter Summary

Licensing Exam

Chapter Notes

Memes!
X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku sat next to Ochako on the bus and chuckled silently at how done Eraserhead looked with all of them. He didn't even wait until the last kid was sitting before activating his quirk and glaring at all of them, "Why don't teenagers come with a volume button."

"We're just excited, Eraser!" Izuku grinned. "We're gonna get our licenses!"

Eraser glared at him, "You're going to *test* to get your licenses. The hardest part is still ahead of you."

"Uh, we've literally fought villains, dude." Kirishima pointed out. "I think we can handle it."

"Yeah, we're gonna blow this outta the water!" Katsuki would have emphasized his point with explosions if his quirk wasn't currently gone. "Don't worry, old man. We won't let it go to our heads."

Eraser raised an eyebrow, "You better not. The kids you'll be fighting against are second and third years and some of them are on their second or third tries. It's not going to be like fighting the league, but that still doesn't mean it's going to be easy."

Izuku felt Ochako trembling with excitement beside him and he couldn't help grinning. Just because it wasn't easy, didn't mean it wasn't possible. He was gonna be a hero.

By the time they arrived at the testing location, most of the other schools were already there. Izuku tried to figure out where all the different busses were coming from, but there were just so many! Would he meet anyone he'd already met? Maybe some of the teachers

were heroes he'd worked with, maybe…"

"Hey, Aizawa!" Shinso said innocently. "Your girlfriend teaches at Ketsubutsu, right?"

Eraser's glare was sharp enough to kill as the entire class exploded into chaos.

"You've got a girlfriend?!" Mina swooned. "What's she like? How did you meet? Are you getting married?!"

Eraser activated his quirk and kept it on until the entire class was silent, "My personal affairs are none of your business. Deal with it."

A few of the students chuckled while others groaned in disappointment, but Shinso had a satisfied smile on his face that really made Izuku wonder what Ms. Joke was planning. He discreetly pulled out his phone and got ready to record, showing his screen to Ochako when she gave him a questioning look. She shot back a knowing smile and held a finger to her lips. No one would know he was recording...until he posted it in the group chat, at least. This was gonna be fun!

The first school they ran into when they got off the bus was Shiketsu, not Ketsubutsu, though, so he was going to have to wait. He figured that the entire mass of students in matching uniforms and hats would have looked really intimidating...if he hadn't just been kidnapped by a supervillain strong enough to injure All Might and then *escaped*. Katsuki was right. Their class could handle anything these guys threw at them.

One of the biggest Shiketsu students came up to them and headed straight for Todoroki, who tensed. The rest of the class followed suit. It wasn't time for the fighting yet. Maybe it started early? Maybe that was part of the test. Was that fair? How did they beat a fight when they didn't know it was even happening?

Todoroki's eyes widened in mild surprise when the mystery student, who seemed oddly familiar, bowed instead of attacking, "I owe you an apology, Todoroki! I underestimated your power and the object of your anger!"

"Um…" Todoroki frowned slightly in confusion. "Thank you?"

The wheels in Izuku's head finished turning and he blurted out, "Oh, you're that kid from teh recommendation exam! I was surprised you

didn't' choose to come to UA!"

"I, uh…" The student, Inasa, if Izuku remembered correctly, grimaced. "It's a long story, but my passion got ahead of my brain for a minute and well...I assumed Todoroki here was like his dad. He's not! Obviously, that would be dumb, but I just saw those cold eyes and thought, if they let people like him into UA...well, what's done is done, but I'm looking forward to fighting you later! Plus ultra!"

The corner of Todoroki's mouth twitched upward in what could almost have been a smile, "Plus Ultra. I will make you pay for comparing me to Endeavor."

Inasa grinned widely, "That's the passion I like to see! I'm gonna enjoy beating you Todoroki!"

Todoroki's smile got a tiny bit bigger, "Likewise."

"Hiya Eraserhead!"

Izuku hit record as fast as he could and panned the camera toward Eraser, who had instantly frozen as soon as he heard her voice. He turned to Shinso, "You two planned for this, didn't you?"

Shinso smiled innocently, but he didn't even try to hide the phone *he* was recording with, "I have no idea what you mean, *Shou."*

Eraser glared at him, "I hate you."

Shinso shrugged, "That's understandable."

Eraser sighed, "What do you want, Joke?"

Mina gasped, "Is that your girlfriend?! Please tell me that's your girlfriend! Do you have any embarrassing stories?"

"Wait, you're dating Ms. Joke?!" Kaminari's eyes were wide with disbelief. "You two can't possibly be a couple."

"Of course we're a couple!" Joke said, grabbing Eraser's arm. "We even have a kid together!"

Izuku was confused for all of half a second before Eraser groaned, "For the last time, Emi, Deku is not our child. He has a mother."

"What makes you think I was talking about him?" Joke gave a mischievous grin. "I was talking about Shinso!"

Shinso spluttered and almost dropped his phone, which made Eraser grin evilly, “Oh yes, how could I have forgotten about him?”

Todoroki looked between the two of them, a completely serious look on his face, “Shinso, are you really Aizawa’s secret love child?”

Shinso turned bright red and started stuttering out denials, and Izuku tried to hold back his laughter, but failed when Todoroki turned to look at him. Izuku couldn’t resist and shrugged at Shinso, “Well, not so secret anymore, huh?”

“I will kill you.” Shinso deadpanned. “I will murder you in your sleep and they will never find your body.”

Izuku shrugged, “Shigaraki already tried that, but if you think you’ll have more success, go ahead. I’m excited to see how this one ends.”

Shinso sighed and Aizawa had a satisfied smile on his face as the rest of the class looked on in confusion. Joke just rolled her eyes, “We’re all basically just one big happy family, so it’s best not to question it too much. You kids ready to get crushed?”

“They’ll be fine.” Aizawa said proudly. “They’ve got a lot of potential.”

Less than two minutes into the exam and everything was already going horribly wrong. Izuku had figured that the other students would come after the UA kids because their quirks were already known, but for some reason he’d assumed that sticking together would still be a viable strategy. One of Ms. Joke’s students had immediately used his vibration quirk, which Izuku would totally be geeking out over later, to cause an earthquake and separate them so that they couldn’t rely on each other. He was confident in his classmates abilities, so he wasn’t *too* worried, but it still would have been nice to be able to fight off their enemies together like they were used to doing against the league.

Izuku took a deep breath and focused on analyzing the situation. He had to take out two other students to pass onto the next phase of the exam, but it wasn’t simple target practice when his targets were moving and fighting back, so it was more about strategy and the ability to hit his opponent’s sensors before they could hit his. It would be nice if he knew everyone’s quirks already, but he’d never let that stop him before, had he? He could do this.

“Hey quirkless!”

Izuku whirled around to see a group of three students coming toward him. He wasn’t quite sure what school they were from but he didn’t recognize them from meeting Joke’s students, so they weren’t from Ketsubutsu and they weren’t wearing hats, so they weren’t from Shiketsu either. But what school they were from ultimately didn’t matter. The only thing that mattered was if he could beat them.

The other students surrounded him ominously and the leader called out to him again, “Oi! Quirkless freak! You listening to us?”

Izuku looked around and his heart sank as he realized what was happening. They were going after him just because he was quirkless and made an easy target. They were underestimating him just like everyone else always had. They were just a few more on the list of people that didn’t think he could be a hero.

“I’m sorry.” One of the more timid members of the group said. “It’s just that it’s our last year and you’re gonna get taken out by *somebody*… ”

“So it might as well be us.” the ringleader smirked. “Sorry to cut your little pretend hero dream short, Quirkless.”

They still hadn’t given him any indication of their quirkes, but Izuku didn’t need that when they had such a glaring weakness that they were putting on clear display for him. He’d show them what a quirkless kid was *really* capable of.

Izuku looked at the leader for a moment before putting the signature Midoriya waterworks to good use and burst into tears, “B-but..I just...you’re not even giving me a chance!”

“Nope.” The third kid took a step forward. “But then again, you never really had a chance in the first place, did you? A quirkless kid can’t really compete on the same level as the rest of us.”

“I-I guess you’re right.” Izuku sniffed, hugging his arms close to his body and using it as a cover to grab one of the balls out of the pockets in his costume. “I really shouldn’t have shown up at all, I just didn’t think everyone would be so strong! I...I thought I stood a chance…”

The ringleader scoffed, “Well you didn’t. So boohoo.”

“We’ll make it quick.” The shy one said. “We still have to find other

targets too.”

Izuku nodded and took a deep breath, visibly bracing himself until the three of them lunged forward to attack him. Then he *moved.*

He went for the shy one first, gripping them in a headlock and hitting all three of their targets one after another. He pushed them away, knocking them into the ringleader while he went after the third one, swiping a leg underneath them and pinning them to the ground as soon as they fell. They tried to activate their quirk and fight back, but there wasn’t enough time for them to do anything before Izuku had taken them out as well. He didn’t even pay attention to his own targets blinking green as he faced down the ringleader and pulled out his gun, “Don’t underestimate your opponents, it’ll get you killed. And by the way, my name isn’t Quirkless...”

Izuku had no idea if this would actually work and count as an “out” but he was angry and figured it was worth a try, since it wasn’t against the rules as far as he’d been told. He shot three times, hitting the ringleader’s targets with rubber bullets and grinning triumphantly when they blinked red and an electronic voice announced that they were eliminated, “It’s Deku.”

He didn’t wait for them to shake themselves out of their shock before turning on his heel and heading toward the waiting room. It didn’t matter if people underestimated him and told him he couldn’t. He was going to be a hero anyway.

Chapter End Notes

Next Update: July 6, 2021 (MDT)

Hurdles

Chapter Notes

Art!
MiHwa
|•Smoked._.salmoN•|

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Shouta groaned and facepalmed as Emi cackled in laughter beside him. He dragged his hand down his face and watched Deku trot off the field with a satisfied smile on his face, “Did that problem child just bait those kids into attacking them so he could eliminate them?”

“Hey, they were the ones who went after him because he was an easy target, they deserved it.” Emi pointed out. “And you can’t deny that it was a pretty smart strategy.”

“Oh, it was brilliant.” Shouta shook his head fondly. “But the fact that he carried it out so brutally was impressive. I’m pretty sure none of us saw *that* coming when a fourteen year old randomly showed up to help us plan a raid. This kid…”

Emi giggled, “Yep! Your other kids are doing pretty well too, don’t you think?”

“No thanks to your students.” Shouta shot her a weak glare. “That earthquake kid made things about ten times more difficult.”

“Meh, your students can handle it.” Emi shrugged. “You’re the one who chose not to tell them about the UA crush.”

“It would be illogical.” Shouta insisted. “They’re not going to be able to hide their quirks from villains. And Deku figured it out anyway.”

“That’s because Deku’s smart.” Emi rolled her eyes. “Oh look! Shinso passed!”

Shouta hummed and leaned forward, “Who did he take out?”

“Hmm, it looks like a chatterbox from one of the smaller schools

and…" Emi's eyes widened. "Oh, is that that bombshell from Shiketsu? Bet he used a pick-up line on her."

Shouta rolled his eyes, "Why did you have to teach the kid to flirt like you."

Emi smiled slyly and bumped him with her shoulder, "Because it always gets a reaction. Isn't that right Shou?"

"I hate you." Shouta deadpanned.

Emi just laughed, "Love you too, Shou. Love you too."

When Izuku got to the waiting room, Shinso and Todoroki were the only members of their class who had already passed and were waiting for him. That inasa kid looked like he was trying to pull Todoroli into a conversation, and Todoroki's shoulders slumped in relief when he saw Izuku heading his way. He turned back to Inasa with a straight face, "Thank you for the conversation, but I must see to my classmate now. Goodbye."

Shinso rolled his eyes and Izuku had to hold back laughter at Inasa's confused expression as Todoroki hurried his way to them, sliding on an ice path that disappeared into steam behind him to get there without running, "Hello Midoriya. I trust you had no problem finding suitable targets."

"Actually, they came to me." Izuku shrugged. "I gotta use those prejudices to my advantage somehow, right?"

"That sucks, but I did the same thing, so I can't judge." Shinso shrugged. "I had someone try to take me out so that the *future villain doesn't ruin the name of heroes.* He had a tendency to monologue, though, so it wasn't that hard to get him to respond."

"I was not targeted." Todoroki frowned thoughtfully. "Unless you count being attacked for being a UA student, in which case, yes, I can relate."

"Speaking of villains." Izuku turned to Shinso. "How have things been going with Kurogiri? I'm pretty sure Eraser said something about you helping out."

Shinso let out a long breath of air, "It's...complicated? There's a lot of stuff going on in the guy's brain, so Nedzu and Recovery Girl think it's

gonna be best for us to go slow. I mean, I've started chipping away at some of the control, but after ten years...there's gonna be a lot of trauma and learned behaviors that I can't just brainwash away. So we're hopeful, but what happens, happens, right? Not much we can do besides try."

Izuku nodded, "Thanks for doing that much."

Shinso scoffed, "It's not like saving people is kinda the bare minimum if I want to be a hero."

"I guess you're right." Izuku smiled and looked around, "How many of the others do you think will pass?"

Shinso shrugged, "Who knows, maybe none of them...oh, nevermind, here comes some more."

Katsuki strode into the room alongside Kirishima and Kaminari, all looking exhausted, but satisfied and Izuku grinned. Katsuki really had grown a lot and oddly enough, he was glad Eraser hadn't ended up expelling him. If the Katsuki from Middle school had seen Izuku pass the first round before him, he would have literally exploded, most likely trying to take Izuku down with him, but instead he and his friends just wandered over at a leisurely pace and katsuki nodded to him, "Hope you gave 'em hell, Deku."

Izuku grinned, "I made them regret underestimating me, that's for sure."

Katsuki returned his grin, "So what do you think these extras have in store for us next round?"

Izuku thought for a moment, "Well this was combat based, so maybe something rescue based? I'm not sure how that works with the whole fighting and competing with each other thing, but there's also the chance we'll have to work together so they can make sure we play nice with others? I'm not sure, but…"

Izuku kept rambling and his classmates nodded along, interjecting with their own theories, ideas, and experiences as the entire class gradually arrived. Izuku couldn't help smiling. Even without knowing what was in store, he knew nothing was going to stop them from being amazing heroes.

By the time the rescue portion finished, Izuku and the rest of the class

were exhausted. Izuku's hand brushed against Ochako's as they walked and he hoped she was feeling ok. He hadn't seen her that much during the exam, but he'd passed her a few times and seen her lifting not only rocks, but entire buildings at some point, just to save the people trapped underneath. He'd had it a lot easier. He'd rescued some people early on, but then Gang Orca and his team attacked and Todoroki and Inasa had been having trouble figuring out how to use their quirks without getting in each other's way. Instead of fighting about it, they'd ended up taking turns, which kept the villain at bay, but wasn't really working as well as they needed, so Izuku had asked Iida to run him over to the fight and Shindo had held off Gang Orca for long enough that Izuku could pull them both aside and come up with the fire tornado strategy. It didn't take long after that for them to end the fight and Gang Orca was cuffed and most of his sidekicks were either fighting one on one with other students or cmentennted to the floor by their own guns by the time the last victim was rescued. Izuku could only hope that it had been enough.

"Deku!" Ochako grabbed his arm and pointed at the screen with a wide smile on her face. "Look!"

Izuku took a deep breath and searched for his name, gasping when he saw *Izuku Midoriya* there in unmistakable print. He'd passed. *He could be a hero.* He had to wipe away tears and Ochako pulled him into a tight hug as they both stared at their names. They did it.

Mera, the hero commission agent running the exam, dragged himself to the podium, "If you passed, congratulations, go to the door on your right where a clerk will print you off your official provisional license. If you didn't, don't despair, there are remedial courses that you can complete."

"Did anyone in our class fail?" Ochako asked. "I think I saw everyone's names."

"I don't know." Todoroki looked up at the board. "I barely scraped by, most likely because of what happened with Inasa before Midoirya showed up, but I passed."

"Of course we all passed, dumbass. We're the best." Katsuki shoved past them. "Now are you all gonna just keep standing there or are we gonna go get our licenses?"

Izuku laughed, wiping the last of the tears from his cheeks and walking toward where Mera had said hero commission clerks were

waiting for them, “Yeah, guys, let’s go. Plus ultra!”

The rest of the class grinned and repeated the cheer as they followed, pushing past the other students who were also all trying to get through the door. There were about a dozen clerks in the room, so they just picked one and got in line, chatting and sharing stories and experiences from the exam until it was their turn.

Kirishima ended up going first, bounding up to the clerk with a wide grin, “hey man! I’m here to pick up my provisional license!”

The clerk nodded, “Name and hero name?”

Krisishima grinned, “Eijiro Kirishima! Red Riot!”

“Alright…” The clerk typed something on his computer. “And your quirk?”

“Hardening!” Kirishima slammed his fists together, activating his quirk. “I can make my skin hard as a rock.”

“Perfect.” The clerk typed a few more things and the printer next to him whirred to life. “Just give that a few seconds for it to print and...perfect. Just make sure everything is correct and there aren’t any misspellings.”

Kirishima took his card reverently, turning it over in his hands for a few moments before turning to the rest of the class, “Guys! I have my license! I’m a hero!”

“Of course you’re a mother fucking hero. You’re fucking awesome.” Bakugo rolled his eyes. “Hey! Extra! Mine next!”

Izuku’s grin got wider and he was practically vibrating with excitement as it got closer and closer to his turn. Ochako noticed, but didn’t do anything to stop him, just smiling fondly and bouncing on her toes as she waited for her own turn. He gestured for her to go ahead of her, “Ladies first.”

Ochako rolled her eyes, “You don’t have to do that, Deku.”

Izuku smiled and shrugged, “I know. Now come on, the faster you get your license, the fast I can get mine!”

She grinned and bounced up to the table, “Ochako Uraraka. Uravity.”

The clerk smiled back, “And your quirk, Uravity?”

“Anti-gravity.” Ochako responded. “I can cancel the gravity of any object by touching it.”

The printer spat out the card and the clerk handed Ochako her card with a smile, “Congratulations, Uravity. I’m sure you’ll be a great hero.”

Ochako showed him her card and pushed him forward. Izuku chuckled and took a deep breath, “Izuku Midoriya. Deku.”

The clerk hummed, “And your quirk?’

Izuku swallowed, but Ochako nodded encouragingly and Izuku smiled, “I’m quirkless.”

The clerk froze. He typed something on his computer and Izuku shuffled nervously. None of his classmates had had this problem, “Um…is there something wrong?”

The clerk huffed and slumped back in his seat, a look of contempt on his face as he raised one eyebrow, “Kid, I don’t know what you think you’re doing here, but there must be some mistake. The ones who failed the exam were supposed to stay in the other room.”

Chapter End Notes

Final Update: July 13, 2021

License

Chapter Summary

What does the future hold?

Chapter Notes

Art!
ThatsSo***Yikes***
RogueBEEctor
cheezit X
A Bloody Droplet Stained Fox

Memes!
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Izuku's stomach sank and he fought to stay upright as he gripped the table, "What?"

The clerk looked like he was holding back a smile, "Go back the way you came. I'm not sure who told you that you could come in here and get a license, but they obviously made some sort of mistake. Now if you'll excuse me, I have other people to help."

"Excuse me?" Ochako slammed her hands down on the table, "Deku's name was on that list, I know it was, just because *you* don't want a quirkless kid to be a hero…"

Izuku grabbed her arm, "Ochako, stop, it's not…"

Ochako turned on him, "Don't you dare say it's not a big deal, Deku! You *earned* that license and if this stupid little bigot isn't gonna…"

"Oi! What's the hold up?" Katsuki stormed back. "We're all waiting for you two idiots!"

Izuku tugged on Ochako's hand, "Let's just go, we'll figure this out later…"

"No!" Ochako glared at the clerk, who stared back unflinchingly. "We can't leave until this bastard gives you your license. You passed that test, Deku. You *earned* it."

“Wait, this guy is refusing to give you your license?!” Katsuki’s hands started letting off sparks. “What the hell is your problem?”

“At the moment, it is children who are holding up my line and preventing me from doing my job.” the clerk replied smoothly. “Now, please. I have *actual* heroes to attend to.”

Izuku grabbed both of them by their collars and physically dragged them away before they could attack the clerk and make an even bigger scene than they already had. Multiple kids from other schools were staring at them as they made their way toward the rest of the class, “Guys, stop. It’s not a big deal.”

“Like hell it’s not, Deku!” Katsuki yelled. “That clerk is a quirkist, bigoted, predujidced peice of…”

“I know.” Izuku cut him off, seething with quiet rage. “Which is why we’re going to go sic Eraserhead on him. We’re gonna make him regret it.”

Shouta leaned against the wall, watching the students mill around and waiting for the last of his kids to get their licences so he could go back to UA and take a nap. Emi was standing beside him, joking with some of their students and giving vaguely cryptic hints about their relationship to an ever persistent Mina, all while not *actually* telling her anything besides jokes. It was kinda funny to watch the poor girl get more and more frustrated at the lack of real answers, but she was going to have to learn eventually that no one was obligated to tell her about their personal affairs. May as well make the experience entertaining to the rest of them.

Suddenly, he heard a commotion and looked up to see Deku, Uraraka, and Bakugo storming toward them. Emi grinned, oblivious to whatever weirdness seemed to be going on with his problem children. She pushed herself off the wall as the kids reached them, “Hey kiddo! Let’s see that license!”

Deku’s expression soured, “They wouldn’t give me one.”

“Why not?” Shouta grit out.

“Why do you think?” Deku snapped. “Because I’m quirkless and there’s no possible way I could have passed the exam.”

“That’s bullshit!” Emi exclaimed. “You passed the exam just like the

quirked students! They have no right to withhold a licence you *earned."*

"Why do you think we were about to fight him?" Bakugo growled. "Deku dragged us away before we could do any damage though. Spoilsport."

Deku rolled his eyes, and smirked, "I figured it was more effective to leave it to the heroes. After all, it *is* their job to resolve injustices. And even underground heroes can't avoid the spotlight sometimes, right?"

Shouta gave a creepy grin, "Exactly. Now which of these guys needs to learn a lesson about discrimination?"

Izuku trailed behind Eraser and Joke as the crowd parted to let them through. MOst of the class was following as well and Aoyama had pulled out his phone to record the whole thing. They'd attracted the attention of about half the room by the time they got back to the table. The clerk rolled his eyes when he saw Izuku, "Kid, I already told you, there must have been some mistake. I'm not giving you a license."

"Really?" Eraser hummed thoughtfully. "You're refusing to give a license to a student who passed the provisional exam?"

The clerk gave them a patronizing look, "There's no way he could have passed. Now as I told the boy already, there's a lot of kids getting licenses today, so if you could please step aside and let me do my job."

"Oh, we're *helping* you do your job." Joke smiled sweetly. "Now run and get your manager and let's see if we can't get this resolved, sound like a plan?"

The clerk sighed in frustration, "Who even are you? The kid's parents or something?"

"Even better." Eraser slammed his license down on the table with a smirk. "We're the heroes who recruited him."

It didn't take long after that for Mera to arrive, eeying Aoyama's camera apprehensive as he got a feel for the situation, "What seems to be the problem?"

The clerk gestured to Izuku in frustration, "This kid keeps insisting that I give him a hero license even though he didn't pass the exam."

“I did pass the exam.” Izuku said, a fake smile on his face. “Just because you decided you don’t want someone like me to be a hero doesn’t mean I didn’t earn *my* license.”

“I’m not sure what the problem is, Midoriya *did* pass the exam. And what do you mean someone like…” Mera trailed off and he went pale. His eyes flicked toward the camera and he shot an angry glare at the clerk before smiling at Izuku, “My apologies, Deku. We’ll get that license processed right away.”

“What?!” The clerk looked betrayed that Mera wasn’t backing him up. “You can’t really be considering…”

“Be quiet.” Mera hissed under his breath. “Do you have any idea of the PR nightmare you potentially just caused? We’re talking about this later.”

Izuku held his head up high as the clerk put in his info and printed off his license, practically throwing it at him as soon as it finished printing.

“Congratulations, *Deku.”* He spat. “You’re a hero.”

“Yeah. I am.” Izuku grinned and turned around holding his license in the air as his classmates cheered. “I’m a hero!”

His cheeks were starting to hurt from how wide he was grinning, but he couldn’t wipe the smile off his face as he looked around at his classmates, each of which fully believed he could be a hero and had fought alongside him, despite him being quirkless. He wasn’t alone anymore. It was oddly fitting to have gotten his license from someone who *didn’t* think he could be a hero. He’d been told he couldn’t so many times, but he’d just have to keep proving them wrong. Izuku looked at his license, *quirkless* written in red letters beneath the quirk section. He’d done it. He’d become a hero and he hadn’t even needed a quirk to do it.

“So kid.” Eraser ruffled his hair. “You’re finally the pro we all thought you were when we first met. How does it feel?”

Izuku grinned, “It feels like I’m just getting started.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank everyone so much for reading this far, esspecially those of you who have been following this story since the beginning. It has

been an adventure and I've come a long way, both in my life and in my writing. Thank you for all the comments, the memes, and the support.

Now onto the next story!

End Notes

This fic has a Tv Tropes page and a Discord.
If you want to yell at me, please leave a comment or find me on tiktok or tumblr.

Anyone can create any fanart, fanfiction or translation based on this work as long as they give me a link so I can enjoy it too!

Works inspired by this one

[Restricted Work] by BabyNonbinaryWitch

Analytics by orphan_account

Watching /Deku? I think he's some pro.../ by Catlady5002 (Catlady5001)

Heard It Through The Grape Vine by Personapokalypse (orphan_account)

Deku? I think he’s some pro... (Fanart) by orphan_account

Quirk Or Not, I Am A Hero by orphan_account

Deku? Alternate Ending: The Sports Festival by Marwil (orphan_account)

A Nail in a World of Rust by PsuedoVillainz

(UP FOR ADOPTION) And Then There Were... Five? by fantasyangelo

[Restricted Work] by luminous_lily12

It's Deku to You. by eraserthceif

"For The Want Of A Nail" things can change by HeadcaseKiller

Jumpstart your Destiny! by Space_Ghost_With_The_Most

All for the want of a horseshoe nail by Fandom_Compass

Wait.. You're All Me?! by 1zu_00 (orphan_account)

FTWOAN, Beyond the fourth wall! by Diana_Soot, Fandom_Compass, Justdumb05, Not_The_State

When Paths Intersect (And Break) by FieldsOfSouls, Voidful_Abyss

UA Teachers Babysit Alternate Selves of the School's Problem Child by HihiImMimi

Just Who's Going To Stop Me? (DISCONTINUED) by SoLar_Crash

and then there were five by orphan_account

A Vigilante's Guide to Parenting by mangawriter77

Reacting to the FTWOAN Series by CrazyHope13

Someone Needed Help? by Loretta9

Someone Hurt? by Loretta9

They Are Not The Same (Not Fully At The Very Least) by PancakeFlowers

[Restricted Work] by Smiley5494

It's Just Business by OneAMYak

Warning Shot by GreekyGeek

Podfic | Deku? I think he's some pro... by micha_making_podfics

Five Problem Children? by 1zu_00 (orphan_account)

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!